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"OH, MY DEAR DOGGIE," MISS BENFORD SAID, "WHAT WOULD I NOT GIVE IF YOU COULD ONLY ANSWER MY QUESTIONS!"

## TRIUMPHANT AT LAST.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

I WAS in the garden, where I almost lived in the sweet summer days.

It was an afternoon, the sun was playing with the leaves above, and making playful figures with his light and shadow on the turf under my feet, and everything was fresh and sweet, and full of fragrance.

I was looking at the dear old home where my husband had brought me some years before with the soft flush of womanhood on my cheeks, and where he kissed me at the door, bidding me welcome, and hoping that Heaven would temper our lives with happiness.

Ah, me! how gloriously we start in life, full of hope and love, and trust; but when years roll by, we too often find that nothing remains but a wreck of what once promised to be an existence bright, happy and useful.

Our house was of moderate size, containing a library and drawing-room opening into each other, a good dining-room, a small sanctum devoted exclusively to my use, where I wrote my letters, dozed dreamily on a hot summer's day over one of my favourite novels, as I lounged cosily on my pretty, delicate, chintz covered couch, or wove pleasant dreams, such as are wont to come to one in the morning of life, before the heat of the noonday battle comes upon us with its cares and anxieties.

I felt so happy amid my flowers, listening to the feathered songsters, and to the plash of the fish as they rose to the surface of the pond, that I quite forgot that visitors were expected to dinner, and was only reminded of the fact when I saw the rosy face of my cook, Deborah Lacking, as she came towards me.

"Lawks, ma'am, do you know the time?" she said, "and that you said we are to have a dinner-party to-night."

"Bless me, I quite forgot all about it," I said, laughing; "it's all owing to this lovely day, and the delicious perfume of my pet roses. Cook, make haste in and attend me in the larder, and I will give you your orders."

Deborah's voice had awakened me from a blissful dream, and strangely enough, I experienced a strange foreboding of coming evil, and it haunted me as I strolled along the shady walks, until by the time I had arrived at the house I was depressed to an extent that puzzled and almost frightened me.

Before giving my instructions for the dinner I ran into Eustace's room to see if he was safe, and found him engaged in writing.

"Well, darling," he said, putting his pen down, "have you come to ask for a kiss, or for some help out of a difficulty? Have the tradesmen failed you, or has Juno trampled down your flower-beds? I declare you look quite anxious and worried; come, Mab, take your favourite seat on my knee, and tell me all about it."

His bright, cheery tones quite dispelled my visionary fears on his account, and we were soon chatting gaily about our invited guests, and of the pleasant evening we expected to spend with them.

My husband said as I was leaving,—

"You must be prepared to entertain an additional guest, a Mr. Cecil Dawlish, who is on a visit with my old college friend Mortimer. I

have just received a letter from him, asking our permission, and have telegraphed saying 'Yes.'"

"I am sorry," I remarked.

"Why, my dear!"

"Because," I said, trying to laugh, "he will make an odd number at the table, which is unlucky, they say."

"You superstitious little goose," my husband replied; "my motto is, 'the more the merrier.' Now run on, darling, and let's see what your ladder can produce."

He pushed me playfully out of the room, with his warm moist kisses on my lips.

Eustace was some twenty years older than I, and his hair began to be sprinkled with salt-tale white, but his heart was still young and full of love for me.

We were very happy in spite of the disparity in age, and life to us had been quite a pastoral poem, uneventful, but very calm and happy, as we glided along over life's sea, one in heart and purpose.

He was tolerably good-looking this husband of mine, fond of his home and books, with which his library was well stocked.

Everything prospered in the kitchen, and at six o'clock I stood before my dressing-glass and put the finishing touches to my toilet, smoothing down my hair with my hand, which was small and delicate.

I saw a bright happy face, with brown dreamy eyes, pencilled brows, small roguish mouth, white even teeth, shapely bust, and a *petite* but elegant little figure. I can hear my husband's voice calling me down to receive the first batch of guests, among whom was Mr. Dawlish.

When his hand touched mine an involuntary shudder ran through me, and I found that his eyes were fastened on mine with a look of admiration that half annoyed, and somewhat alarmed me, because of their snaky expression; but this feeling wore off before we quitted the drawing-room to assemble at dinner.

As he is destined to play a most important part in my future I shall endeavour to describe him as I saw him then.

I need hardly say that he was fashionably attired, from his collar down to his well-fitting, highly-polished boots, a splendid opal ring, full of mysterious lambent flames, adorned his right hand, the fingers being long and shapely, indicating strength and intelligence.

A superficial observer would have deemed him one of the Dandere type, but beneath his drawl and assumption of that bored air so common to men of fashion there lay deep depths, which few could fathom, reservoirs full of strength of purpose, an indomitable will which would influence his life and those of others for good or evil, according to his bent. My husband evinced a partiality for him from the first, which was unusual, as he was chary in bestowing his friendship until he had tested the individual's worth.

Everything passed off nicely, and I sang a duet with Mr. Dawlish, who possessed a fine baritone voice highly cultivated.

At the conclusion of our duet I was pleased and amused to hear the obsequious voice of an old and very dear friend exclaiming,—

"Bravo!"

It was Harry Belton, an old friend of the family, and one of the best hearted creatures that ever breathed.

To punish him for his audacity I playfully insisted upon his joining Mr. Dawlish in "All's Well," and we were all highly amused at the ingenious excuses he put forward to evade the penalty.

I can hear even now my husband's voice taking leave of our guests, and his parting words to Dawlish,—

"Come and see us again soon; I find we are near neighbours; don't wait for an invite, Mr. Dawlish."

I was nearly guilty of a rudeness; an almost irresistible impulse seized me to remonstrate with him for having done so.

Even at that early period of our acquaintance the man exercised a sort of spell over me—his eyes haunted me, and I caught myself speculating upon the probability of his acceptance of the in-

itation, with a half formed wish that he would, and that soon.

Eustace was delighted with his new friend, and said to me,—

"Mab, what do you think of our new acquaintance, Dawlish? Gentlemanly fellow, isn't he? I mean to see as much of him as possible."

"Any friend of yours is welcome to me; but is this not rather unusual for you, dear Eustace, to take up with a new face so suddenly? I cannot give an opinion about him at present, except that he appears a very agreeable and highly cultivated man. But how long has Mr. Mortimer known him?" I asked.

"Unexceptionable references required in his case—eh, little woman? Upon my word I never thought of questioning Mortimer concerning his antecedents. I know he is well connected, and possesses a somewhat ample fortune, and is a thorough sportsman, which will make him a jolly companion for me."

"That will be nice," I remarked; "but I hope he will not monopolise too much of your society and keep you away from home."

Eustace kissed me fondly as he said,—

"No one shall ever come between us, dear Mab, and as for Dawlish, why, I believe that even you will come to like him very much in time, although you seem slightly prejudiced against him now."

I laughingly disavowed the imputation, and the subject dropped.

The next morning I was engaged in my favourite occupation, attending to the flowers, clipping the dead bloom from the roses and cutting fresh ones to decorate the rooms.

I had just finished my task, and was gathering up my basket to return to the house, when my flowers were rudely knocked out of my hand, and, to my horror, my fresh, crisp, white robe, with its pretty pink ribbon trimmings, was splashed and covered with mud by my incorrigible unstaffed Juno, who had been disporting herself in the pond, having broken loose, a favourite trick of hers.

To add to my dilemma Mr. Dawlish rode to the spot and, raising his hat, bade me "Good-morning," while Juno looked with her beautiful large eyes into his face and gave a low menacing growl, for which piece of rudeness I tried in vain to correct her; but she rushed away from my side and trampled down some of the geranium beds.

"Is Mr. Garland at home, might I ask?" he said with a smile and a quick glance at my disordered attire.

"No, Mr. Dawlish; but he will be shortly. Will you come in and wait?"

"With pleasure," he said, giving me a look with his piercing eyes that somewhat disconcerted me; "with your kind permission, I will ride round to the stable, Mrs. Garland, and then join you; but first permit me to gather up your roses."

Before I could reply he was out of the saddle and on his knees collecting my scattered treasures, which he placed in the basket, handing it to me with a courtly bow, and a smile that displayed his white firm teeth.

I never liked his smile, because it imparted a sinister expression to his otherwise pleasing face, and made me somewhat afraid of him, just as I have felt at the Opera, when seeing *Faust*, in the scene where Mephistopheles is confronted by the crosses on the hills of the balberds.

I thanked him, and he walked by my side, leading his horse and chatting pleasantly about the delightful evening he had spent.

"What an Eden this is!" he exclaimed; "a veritable paradise, in fact. Your husband, Mrs. Garland, is to be envied."

"Why?" I asked, blushing slightly at the implied compliment to me; "there are spots quite as fair."

"But I challenge England to produce so fair a mistress."

"You are a flatterer, sir, I am afraid."

"Truth cannot flatter any more than the sun does when it displays the rare beauties of flowers, the deep blue of the sky, or the proud superiority of a queen of beauty shining bright and clear like a constellation among lesser stars."

"The compliment is not suited to me," I said,

laughing; "really, Mr. Dawlish, I cannot listen to such open flattery, but I will pardon you this time if you will promise me not to offend again."

"I crave your mercy, fair lady," he said, gaily; "and to show me that I have not incurred your serious displeasure bestow upon me a favour."

"But it might not be in my power," I replied.

"All I ask is a simple rose that has been gathered by your fair hand."

"You may choose one," I replied, in a tone of badinage.

"That would be ungracious. I say give, and you answer take, that is scarcely fair."

I selected a moss-bud and presented it to him, when, to my great astonishment, he kissed my hand, then the rose, which he placed in his coat, smiling his thanks.

Excusing myself, I hurried away to change my dress, glad enough to escape from his admiring glances, which seemed to me to wrong my dear husband.

When I came down my Eustace had returned, and was entertaining our guest, both of them being on the best of terms with each other.

## CHAPTER II.

ONE morning a letter was lying on the breakfast table from Dora Winton, a dear school chum of mine, saying she was coming to Elmhurst to stay for a few weeks, if convenient.

She was a great favourite of mine, and I wrote off at once to tell her she was as welcome as the flowers that I loved so well, and of which she reminded me.

She arrived soon afterwards, to our great delight, for Eustace was quite as fond of her as I was myself.

We formed quite a merry quartette, inclusive of Mr. Dawlish, who was now a constant visitor, and who paid Dora marked attention when my husband was present.

Dora was a sweet, winsome English lassie, full of brightness and amiability, that won their way to the hearts of everybody.

I was secretly grieved to perceive that Dawlish did not reciprocate the liking that Dora had conceived for him, and which promised to develop into something warmer on her part.

These were halcyon days indeed, and I look back upon them even now with feelings of unfeigned pleasure and delight, mixed with regret that anything should have marred them.

But a serpent had crept into our Eden, a fact which I was the first to conceive.

Truth dawned upon me at last, that Dawlish was pursuing me, and deceiving both Dora and my too confiding husband. He was too cunning to show his hand openly to me, but my woman's acute perception discovered what he artfully desired to conceal.

I dared not even to hint at this to Eustace, because I had no proofs to adduce, for Dawlish had said nothing to wound my susceptibilities in the slightest degree.

I cannot say that I disliked the man, for no woman ever has, or can show detestation of homage, especially when her admirer is a gentleman of position, and conducts himself in an uncompromising way; besides he had become necessary to my husband, who seemed to enjoy his friendship and companionship thoroughly.

I felt strong in my integrity of purpose, and hoped that Dawlish would come to see the failure of any hopes he had conceived to win me from the man I loved, and the bright happy home which sheltered me.

One day Eustace received a letter requesting his immediate attention in London, in connection with a Chancery suit he was deeply interested in.

"My darling," he said, as he kissed me, "I must part from you for a little while, and for the first time since we have been wed, but you will have Dora to keep you company, and Dawlish to look after you both until I return."

"Take me with you," I cried, "dear Eustace," so earnestly that he looked at me with astonishment, and winding his protecting arms about me,



he said, as he drew my head to his breast, "Cannot my darling little wife bear a week's separation? I would take you with me, but I should be no company, as I'd have to be at the courts all day; be a brave little woman, and let me kiss your tears away. I will leave you in good hands, write daily, and shall pop home from Saturday to Monday."

I felt that the approaching separation would mark an epoch in our lives, and be productive of evil of some kind.

I stood at the gate waving my handkerchief to Eustace while he was in sight, and my heart went out in prayer that Heaven would bring him safely back to me and shield me from temptation. As I turned from the spot, low spirited and depressed, I was rallied by Dora, who said,

"Why, Mab, you are a love-sick matron, and like a dame of old who has parted from her knight bound for the wars; come, come, Eustace left you in my charge, and I will have no moping, or tears, or any such thing."

"I know I am very tiresome, Dora," I replied; "but you have never had a husband."

"But hope to some day," she said, roughly. "When I do I shall only be too glad to pack him off to his business, and not keep him like a tame cat at my heels all day; but here comes our dear cavalier, escorted, as usual, by Juno, who seems to have changed her opinion about him—fickle, like all our sex. Why, look! I do believe he is kissing her; what can he be about?"

Taking my arm she raced me to the gate, bringing the flush to my cheek and a sparkle in my eyes, quite obliterating all traces of my recent sadness.

"Good morning, fair ladies," Dawlish said. "I am making Juno my friend for ever, by presenting her, not with a bouquet or a nocket of perfume, but a simple collar with an appropriate inscription."

"Simple, indeed," exclaimed Dora, as she clapped her hands with glee at the comical but proud air that Juno assumed, as she wagged her tail and looked up at us knowingly, while she licked the hand of the donor.

"Isn't it pretty?" I exclaimed, with animation, that brought the too well remembered look of admiration into his face.

He hastened to reply,—"I would gladly present doggie with a gold collar, instead of a silver, for the pleasure of seeing your appreciation."

As we were planning our programme for the day a telegraph boy came, and said, "for Miss Winton." Dora turned pale as she read the telegram, and said,—

"Oh! dear Mabel, I am so sorry, but I must leave by the next train for London."

"Why, dear, what has happened?" I cried, while Dawlish stood by looking sympathetic.

"My dear mother has been suddenly seized with serious illness. Oh! I am so grieved, and must go and get ready at once."

Taking her hand lovingly in mine, as I saw the tears in her blue eyes, and the nervous twitching at the corners of her sweet mouth, I kissed her tenderly and led her quickly into the house, leaving Dawlish to follow if he chose.

Dora, with my help, was soon ready for her journey, and we found Dawlish waiting with my pony carriage to drive us to the station.

The whole affair was so sudden, and gave me such preoccupation of mind, that I did not even think of how her leaving would embarrass me, nor did I realize this until the train steamed out of the station, and I found myself alone with Dawlish.

When he suggested a long drive I assented mechanically, as I was too stunned by the double event of my husband's and Dora's departure to be mistress of my inclinations.

The beauty of the simple English scenery, with its scented hedgerows, bright berries of scarlet, waving trees, and rustling corn, with red and blue poppies gleaming gold-like in the bright sun, formed a picture that calmed my mind, and made me forget, for a brief time, that I was away from home with the man that I liked and yet feared.

Suddenly the sun was obscured by heavy clouds that threatened a hasty downpour.

My companion had been silent for some time, as if in thought, but now he aroused himself and remarked, with evident concern,—

"I fear that you are not clad to meet the shower that may burst over us at any moment," as he glanced at my pale pink morning costume.

"What is to be done?" I replied, as great drops began to fall upon my fragile lace-covered sunshade.

Giving me the reins, he took off his overcoat, and placed it round my shoulders, with an air of great solicitude that I could not help feeling grateful for.

Flashes of forked lightning, followed by peals of thunder, caused my pony, "Little Beauty," to become restive, and I had to coax and soothe it before it would proceed.

There was no help for it but to drive fast to the "Golden Lion Hotel," which was close handy, where we alighted, and were shown into a comfortable sitting-room.

Nothing could exceed Dawlish's attention in point of gentlemanly tact and unobtrusive kindness.

We partook of luncheon, as our stay had to be protracted on account of the weather, which gave no signs of clearing up.

"How strange," I thought, "that this morning, which commenced so bright, sunny, and clear, should have changed so suddenly into one dreary, cold, wet, and cheerless, with its alarming peals of thunder that broke over the hotel as if it would tear it from its foundation."

"Is this but a presentiment of my future life, this, my first day without my husband," I thought, as I sat looking out upon the war of the elements.

I was known to the landlord, who kindly placed a closed carriage at my disposal, which I gladly accepted, as the storm was nearly over.

I received a letter from Eustace full of love and tenderness, telling me everything he had done, and begging a line from me by return of post.

I acquainted him of Dora's sudden departure, but said nothing about the adventure with Mr. Dawlish; something seemed to stay my hand from writing his name, but even I was powerless to analyze my true feelings for this man.

He came every day and talked and made himself unobtrusively useful and even necessary to me; and when the hour for his visit arrived, and he was not there, I felt a strange restlessness, which was an enigma to myself, and would stroll to the gates and look down the road from whence I might catch a glimpse of his now well-known form.

Eustace returned on the Saturday with a love-light sparkling in his soft, kind eyes; and I was so happy in his presence, for I felt like a child would who had passed through some danger, and was now safe under the care of its natural protectors.

"Why, little woman," he said, "it tempts me to go away for a few days, even when not engaged in business, to receive such a welcome to my dear little home from such a sweet little wifey."

As I listened to his fond, truthful words, I thought "am I still deserving of this man's great unselfish, confiding love," and I made an inward resolve to be worthy of him by resisting my tempter to the utmost.

That evening as my husband was busy with his rake among the strawberry beds, which, he said, looked very neglected since his absence, and to which my looks pleaded guilty, I was surprised to see walking towards us Mr. Hurst, the landlord of the "Golden Lion," with a small packet.

Raising his hat he said,— "I was passing this way, madam, and, therefore, brought some property of yours which was found after you and the gentleman left last Monday."

"I thank you very much," I stammered, as I took the little parcel from his hand, and caught my husband's eyes fixed searchingly upon my blushing face. "It's only a little silk handkerchief, Eustace," I hastened to remark, as I saw

the look of surprise and inquiry in his face, which increased my confusion, as I added, "When Dora went away I drove with her and Mr. Dawlish to the station, and afterwards continued the drive, when a heavy storm came on, and we were forced to seek shelter at Mr. Hurst's hotel."

By this time I was able to look him full in the face, conscious of my integrity, but could glean nothing from its expression, save that there was no answering smile or a look of love.

Whatever his feelings were he was careful to keep them under control, and merely replied,—

"It was kind of him to take such care of my wife, but you forgot to mention the incident in your letters. I really thought, Mabel, that you had had a dull time of it, but I see I was mistaken."

When Mr. Dawlish called I noticed a coldness in Eustace's greeting.

One day after our return from a visit in the neighbourhood I was in my sanatorium writing to Dora, and my husband was in the conservatory, when my attention was arrested by hearing Deborah's shrill voice raised, and I even now remember her words, which were the prelude to a most unhappy state of things.

"How dare you speak of our mistress and Mr. Dawlish in that disgraceful way—always together, indeed, late at night. If you don't keep a still tongue in your head I'll see that you are out of this sharp."

I rose and looked out of the window, and saw Eustace, whose face was white and drawn as I had never seen it before during all our wedded life, and I was at a loss to know the cause.

But I was not prepared for the storm which followed, or for his sudden ebullition of jealousy, which quite took me aback.

He came in almost immediately, and said, sternly,—

"Mrs. Garland, it is my painful duty to tell you that your name is being lightly mixed up with that of Mr. Dawlish, even by your own servant. I shall forbid any further visits from him to my house; do you understand me?"

"Quite," I replied, with rising anger in my tone, for I felt that he was treating me unjustly and harshly, since he himself had done all in his power to throw us together, even against my express wishes.

"You take it coolly," he remarked.

"Are you placing me on my defence, Eustace?" I asked; "if so I have none to make, simply because, neither in thought, word, nor deed have I been anything but a true wife to you; and as this subject is one I do not care to discuss I shall leave the room."

I walked towards the door, when he arrested me rather roughly, saying,—

"You shall stay, Mabel, and hear me out."

"As you please," I replied; "but remember the respect that is due to me as a lady."

"I always pay respect where it is due, madam."

"Mr. Garland, how dare you insult me?" I exclaimed, as I drew myself up proudly, and looked at him angrily and defiantly, feeling thoroughly outraged and somewhat bewildered at this jealous onslaught, which I considered I had not provoked in any way.

"No lady would think of accompanying anybody but a near relative to an hotel to lunch, or of occupying a private room."

I could scarcely believe the evidence of my senses, or that this was the gentle, tender, loving husband and perfect gentleman I had hitherto found him.

"Do you wish to drive me away?" I asked. "You should protect my honour and be the last to take heed of the vulgar gossip of the servants' hall. I am thoroughly hurt, Eustace, and grieved that you should believe me anything but pure in my friendship for the man whom you deputed to take charge of me in your absence."

As my husband was about to reply Mr. Dawlish was announced.

"Tell him," he exclaimed loudly and angrily, "that Mr. Garland is not at home to him."

I fancy I could see the look of surprise and disappointment which this rebuff caused him, for he must have overheard it.

Dating from this time a coldness sprang up between my husband and myself, although we treated each other with studied politeness and courtesy; very different this to the affectionate terms we had hitherto lived on.

The poisoned arrow of jealousy rankled in his mind, and I became painfully aware of espionage on his part, which I thought base and cruel, and which I quickly resented, but without checking it.

### CHAPTER III.

OUR lives continued to be an armed truce; my pride forbade that I should ask forgiveness for a fault I had not committed, whilst his jealousy had taken such a hold of him that he would not believe me innocent.

At last he was confined to his room with a severe cold, and, it being the Sabbath, I went to church alone.

Just as the service commenced someone entered my pew, and on looking up I saw Mr. Dawlish by my side; a feeling of fear and terror seized me, and my hands trembled as I held my hymn-book, but summoning all the courage I could to my aid, I went through the comforting service of our church, without once turning my eyes in his direction.

When I rose to leave he opened the door of the pew for me to pass out, and then followed and walked by my side through the quaint, dear old village to the gate of our house, where he left me.

As I walked up the drive I came face to face with my husband, who confronted me with concentrated fury expressed in his face.

"You forget, madam," he almost hissed, "that our grounds have two gates, and that I could see you part from the man I forbid my house; you thought I was snug in my chamber, and could defy me, but I am not to be hoodwinked in this shameless fashion."

I was so surprised that my answer to this tirade was a reproachful look only, words being denied me. At last I managed to stammer out—

"You are no gentleman."

He raised his hand as if to strike me, but turned away on his heel, and relieved me of his presence.

One evening, after the scene referred to, I was walking in the grounds, thinking of the contrast of my loveless life now to what it had been, when I was startled by hearing my name spoken softly.

In another moment Dawlish stood before me. "This is ungenerous, unfair," I said. "You must know how distasteful your visits have become to my husband."

"Why, Mrs. Garland, I am innocent of having given any cause of offence, surely this is unjust to me."

"Leave me, sir," I said, "you have caused me enough trouble, without adding to it in this way."

"It is unmanly of him to vent his spleen upon you who are the loveliest, best and brightest of your sex; rely upon my constant friendship, and—"

My husband appeared suddenly before us, and struck him a violent blow on the chest with his clenched hand, as he hissed—

"You scoundrel, leave this spot, that you have turned into a place of torment; and you, madam, pack up your things and go, for you are no longer wife of mine."

"Mr. Garland, your age and the presence of this lady protects you from chastisement; she will be well rid of such a churlish fellow as you."

How I passed through the night I never knew; I gladly welcomed the morn, with the cheerful songs of birds, and the bright rays of the sun which stole into my chamber like silent comforters.

A short time sufficed for my packing, as I only chose to take articles that were absolutely necessary, leaving all the jewellery that was given me by Eustace behind, together with the greater portion of my wardrobe, lest he should say that I was enriched by him to that extent.

But my own jewellery, which had belonged to my dear mother, and was of considerable value, I took away with me; although the hour was early, I heard my husband stirring.

"He has relented," I thought, "and perhaps after all will beg of me not to go."

I dallied over my breakfast in the hope that he would join me, but all in vain; he did not come, and the thought of his cruelty made me weep afresh for the unhappiness which I could plainly see was in store for both of us.

Even after I had despatched my luggage to the station I waited fully twenty minutes outside his chamber door, on the chance of seeing him, and begging that we should not part in anger.

I knocked timidly at the door, calling him by name, but received no answer.

Pulling down my veil to hide my fast-falling tears, I went downstairs, and out into Heaven's sunshine, to face a hard, bitter, cruel world, with but a few pounds in my pocket.

I walked like one dazed and dreaming, and reached the station just in time to catch my train to London.

We were about starting, when the door opened, and a gentleman entered; but who it was I neither knew nor cared, my self-absorption was so great.

We were off, and then raising my eyes I almost screamed when I saw who my companion was.

"Why do you persecute me?" I asked, almost hoarsely, and with a savage instinct upon me to spring at his throat, and annihilate him on the spot. "You have brought all this misery upon me, and are the cause of my being driven from my home. I wish to Heaven that you had never entered it. I was happy in my husband's love, and never knew a care till you, like some evil thing, came across its threshold to blight and wither it."

"I can forgive everything you accuse me of," he replied, gently; "all I crave is that you will trust me as a true friend, and permit me to contribute to your future happiness and comfort."

"I would rather starve," I said, "than receive a single favour at your hands; all I ask is that you will never cross my path again, or, as a woman rendered homeless and desperate, through your agency, I might forget my sex and do you some mischief."

"You may kill me if you like," he replied, "for life without you would be simply unendurable. I must speak, Mabel. I loved you from the first hour of our meeting, and can no more help it than can the sun to shine, or the moon to give its light; am I so hateful to you that you cannot even look at me without anger blazing in those beautiful eyes? I have wealth, position all of which I humbly lay at your feet, and when the law has freed you from your hateful yoke I will lead you to the altar as my darling beautiful wife."

I listened to these words hardly realising their import, save that they were an insult to me, for I was still Eustace Garland's wife, pure in heart and soul, as upon the day when I first pledged my troth to him, in the sight of Heaven and of man.

"If there is a spark of manly feeling left in your heart," I said, with a great sob of anger in my voice, "you will cease to persecute me in this cruel and dastardly fashion; one word from you to my husband would convince him of my innocence; why not return to him, and do me justice? Remember the happiness of two human beings is at stake, and that there are plenty of women in the world that can be wooed honourably."

He sat silent and absorbed, apparently unwilling to answer my earnest appeal.

Once or twice I caught him stealing glances at my sorrow-stricken face, down which tears fell in scalding drops, and I hoped that the sight of my misery would touch his heart.

Turning to me he said,—

"Dear Mrs. Garland, to win back your good opinion I will sacrifice my feelings and inclinations, and do as you wish, but do not blame me if I fail."

So great was my gratitude that I caught his hand, and said,—

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this promise, which comes to me like golden sunshine through the black clouds of despair; you will have done a noble action and repair a

grievous wrong; for, indeed, I love my husband dearly, and no man can ever take his place in my heart."

"Dear madam," he said, "believe me when I say that I have no wish to harm you in any way. I will forget my madness, and leave the neighbourhood until this affair has blown over."

"Had I better not return at once, Mr. Dawlish?"

"I think not," he replied, after a pause; "let me leave you at the Terminus Hotel, where you can write a letter to your husband which I will deliver."

"Had I not better send it by post?" I asked. "I am sure Eustace would prefer that."

"Allow me to think for you, dear Mrs. Garland; by taking the letter myself to your husband I shall have an opportunity of convincing him of the sad mistake he has fallen into."

I agreed to his proposal, and allowed him to accompany me to the hotel, a most injudicious step, and one that I had cause to regret.

But my mind was so unbalanced that I could not reason with so specious a man as Mr. Dawlish.

He waited whilst I wrote the letter and left me with a hope beating high in my poor heart of a complete reconciliation between Eustace and I.

The hours sped by and I paced the large comfortable apartment, waiting for a message, or, dearer hope still, for the well-known foot-step of my husband.

I gazed out into the busy street, with its human tide surging along, and wondered if there could be one amongst it so thoroughly wretched and anxious as I; the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece aroused me to the fact that time was fleeting, and that this was my first day away from my home without Eustace.

I deeply regretted now my hasty step; but my pride would not permit me to undo it, without his meeting me half way; besides, I had written him a loving letter containing not one word of reproach about his mad and foolish jealousy.

The welcome appearance of a telegraph messenger running up the broad flight of steps caused my heart to beat so fast that I placed my hand tightly over it to still its pulsations.

I opened the door and held out my hand, saying,—

"I am Mrs. Garland."

"It is not for you, ma'am," the boy said.

The disappointment caused me such a shock that I tottered and sank into a chair prostrate—hopeless.

How long I sat I never knew till I was aroused by footsteps in the room, and I heard a voice say—

"Mrs. Garland—"

"Has he not come? have you a letter for me?" I asked, eagerly interrupting the speaker—Mr. Dawlish.

"Calm yourself, dear madam," he said, soothingly. "I saw Mr. Garland, and gave him your letter—"

"Yes, yes, and he read it, and you told him?" I almost gasped—my breath came so fast.

"I hardly like to tell you," he replied.

"Let me know the worst," I said, pressing my temples with my burning hands; "I must try to bear it."

"He tore your letter into shreds, and refused to permit me to address him."

"And this is true?" I asked, dreamily.

"I swear it."

"Then I shall return to him only when he begs my pardon and forgiveness on his knees," I said, as I reeled towards a chair for support; but before I reached it I caught sight of his face in the mirror, wearing an expression of malignant triumph.

I turned to confront him, but my senses left me, and I fell to the floor.

### CHAPTER IV.

WHEN I returned to consciousness I found myself still at the hotel, in the hands of a matronly, kind-faced woman, the manageress, who said,—

"Your husband has gone, madam, but left



word he would call again shortly, so you must not worry yourself, or you will be right down ill."

I listened to these words without grasping their import, for my mind had received a shock from which it had not quite recovered, and I said,—

"Very well, but please leave me now; I feel weary, and wish for rest and quiet."

"Certainly, dear madam; but you need refreshment surely; some soup, or a cup of tea; you are fatigued and weak."

"As you please," I said, wearily.

This was the first great trouble of my life, and I was ready to sink under it, caring little whether I lived or died.

"My husband," I kept repeating to myself, just like a child who has heard of some pleasure store for it.

Strangely enough I had forgotten all about Mr. Dawlish, and my having left home in such bitter trouble; although there was a dread of something evil which haunted me like a spectre, hovering about my couch, and making me feel wretched without well knowing why.

It appeared as if Heaven had tempered the blow to my strength, and mercifully blotted out the past from my memory.

I ate and drank mechanically, and then slept soundly, and did not awake till the following morning, when the sun poured in a flood of light into my chamber, filling me with delight for the moment, which, however, was soon dispelled when my mind, now restored to its balance, reverted to the past, and brought back to me vividly the scenes through which I had passed during the last week.

I arose and dressed myself, and had finished breakfast when Mr. Dawlish was announced.

My first impulse was to refuse to see him, for all my old bitterness of feeling for him had come back to me in tenfold force, until I now hated the very mention of his name.

But it was just possible he might have something to tell me about Eustace, something that would comfort me, perhaps, and eventually lead to our complete reconciliation, so I consented to see him.

"Good morning, dear Mrs. Garland," he said, suavely, as he held out his hand, an act, however, which I chose to ignore; "I am so glad to see that you are better," this not quite so friendly, for my face wore a hard, stern expression, and his outstretched hand remained untaken.

"Have you any message for me from my husband?" I asked, quietly.

"None."

"Then what brings you here, pray?"

"My anxiety to serve you. Oh! Mabel—"

"Stop!" I said, as I rose with indignation in my face and flashing from my eyes; "if you dare to insult me again by your familiarity I shall ring the bell and claim the protection due to a lady in my position."

The hot blood surged into his face, and he glared at me so viciously that I became alarmed, for he seemed transformed with fury, which he vainly tried to suppress, as he said,—

"Have a care, Mrs. Garland; I can be as bitter an enemy as I can a firm friend. Which is it to be?"

"Which you please, Mr. Dawlish; I neither value your friendship nor your enmity, as our paths for the future will be directly opposite."

"Pause and consider your position, Mrs. Garland," he said, with a covert sneer that aroused my spirit.

"My position," I replied, hotly; "whom have I to thank for it, Mr. Dawlish? If I had a brother he would chastise you for your mean, contemptible conduct towards a lady who has never injured you in thought, word or deed."

"Very melodramatic," he sneered; "but your husband has thrown you off for ever, and the world will not stop to inquire whether you are innocent or not."

"What care I for the world, or its false opinions," I retorted; "nor do I care to accept you as its exponent; go, leave me, this is my apartment and you have no right here."

"I obey you, madam," he said, with that Mephistophelean smile peculiar to him; "but

the day will come when you will be glad of my friendship, and, perhaps, my protection."

If he had not left the room so suddenly I would have struck him, so great was my indignation at his daring to speak to me in such a humiliating way.

Within an hour I had paid my bill and left the hotel, going to an address given to me by the good-natured manageress, where I could engage apartments.

In the hurry of the moment I forgot to tell her not to give my address to Mr. Dawlish, nor, indeed, did I think that, considering the nature of our recent interview, he would care to trouble me any further.

I found comfortable rooms in a fine old-fashioned house that led out of Cheyne-walk, Chelsea, and was delighted with their comfort and the economical charges.

I could have lived very happily if my small stock of money was not dwindling away with alarming rapidity; and although I had my jewellery to fall back upon I shrank from the thought of parting with it because it had been the gift of my dear dead mother in the days when I knew no cares, and was surrounded by tenderness and affection.

I looked upon them as sacred relics, which it would be sacrilege to allow to pass into the hands of strangers.

I resolved to take my landlady, who seemed a nice motherly person, into my confidence, but not before I had seen my friend, Dora, as I felt that I had no right to keep her in ignorance of my position, as it would pain her deeply to think she had lost my confidence.

Besides, I felt strong in my innocence, and had nothing to fear at her hands.

One morning I set out full of hope with Heaven's sun shining brightly, and all nature in full rejoicing over the happy, restful calm that overshadowed everything.

I had only one sovereign left now in my purse, and I resolved to be very economical until I could see Dora, and borrow sufficient for my present needs.

Taking the bus to Hammersmith I purchased a third class return to Richmond—a thing I had never had occasion to do before.

On one of the platforms, en route, I saw my husband with my dear old dog Juno, which recognized me as I looked furtively out of the window, and barked joyously and bounded towards the carriage, but as the train did not stop at the station the darling was soon left behind.

From the passing glimpse I had of Eustace I could perceive that his face was pale and wan, as if suffering silent grief at our separation.

It would appear as if fate had resolved that we two should keep apart, for if the train had halted I would certainly have spoken, and trusted to our mutual love for the rest.

I reached Dora's home at last, and my disappointment was great when I learnt that she had gone abroad with her mother only the day previous, and had left no fixed address, as they intended to travel, as advised by the physician.

The old housekeeper, who had been left in charge of the house, and whom I had known for many years, noticed my agitation, and kindly insisted upon my staying to partake of luncheon.

But my heart was so sick at my prospects, which owing to the disappointment was very great, that I had not the courage to remain in a place which I had so often entered as a happy wife, without a care or trouble to harass my mind.

Thanking her for her politeness, I turned away, and drawing down my veil to hide the tears that would well up in my eyes I walked aimlessly along the street, passing many familiar places, all of which added to my anguish, for I had known them when joy was at my heart, and my husband at my side.

I walked past the old well-remembered "maid of honour" shop, where not six weeks ago I had made purchases that caused Eustace to remark, playfully,—

"Why, Mab, darling, you will clear the shop and our pockets, too."

And now I had not even one solitary pound to call my own, and knew not where I could obtain any assistance.

I found myself at last on the bank of the river, with its waters running placidly by, forming eddies here and there, and lighted by the glorious rays of the sun.

I listened to their musical murmur, and my disordered imagination conjured up voices which seemed to say,—

"Come, weary one, lay down life's burden, and rest with us under the cool, gentle waters that will hide thee for ever from men's malice and woman's envy."

My brain was very weak and dizzy, for I had eaten nothing since an early breakfast, consisting of bread-and-butter and a cup of coffee, or I should not have had these strange fancies haunting me and tempting me to an act of self-destruction.

A steamboat filled with pleasure-seekers distracted my attention, and made me forget the horrid temptation.

I turned into the park, and, strangely enough, the first person I encountered was my old friend Captain Belton.

It was too late to avoid him, so I held out my hand and greeted him with affectionate warmth.

"This is indeed a pleasant surprise," he said.

"But where is Eustace?"

This question relieved me from a feeling of embarrassment, for it showed that he was not aware of our changed relations.

"Oh," I answered gaily, "he is at home, and I am visiting some friends."

My manner while with him had lost all traces of sadness, and I became my old self, thereby throwing him off his guard.

Before we parted he promised to visit Elm-hurst the following day to keep my husband company, little thinking of the changed home he would find, or how black I would be made to appear in his eyes.

When he had left me I threw myself on a seat, and a flood of tears relieved my pent-up feelings, and no doubt saved me from a severe attack of hysteria.

## CHAPTER V.

I was back at my lodgings again, talking to Mrs. Hewett, the landlady, about myself and the chances of appointment as governess and companion.

"I am glad you have taken me into your confidence, miss, for I think I can be of some service to you, as I know of an elderly lady who rented my drawing-rooms and only left a week before you came, who wanted a lady to act as her companion; she is the widow of an Indian officer, without children. Now if you like, I will give you her address; let me see, it's somewhere in Regent's-park."

She fumbled in a capacious pocket of the good old-fashioned sort, and produced at last an envelope, which she handed to me, saying,—

"That's it; but of course you will pardon me for reminding you that Mrs. Delancy will require exceptional references."

These words reminded me of what my husband had said about my requiring exceptional references before admitting Mr. Dawlish to our house on a friendly footing.

How stern and practical are life's lessons! For here was I having the same thing said to me in sober earnest.

"I am afraid," I answered, "that I know of no one to whom I could apply."

I could perceive that my words had impressed her unfavourably, for she looked at me narrowly, but not unkindly, as she said,—

"Surely you must know of someone!"

I shook my head sadly, and tears dimmed my eyes as I thought,—

"Even this kind-hearted woman, who wished to befriend, is becoming suspicious."

My evident distress appealed to her sympathies, for she said,—

"Don't fret, my dear. I like your face because it's a good one, and reminds me of my dear girl

that I buried only two years ago last month, and will write to Mrs. Delaney, giving myself as a reference."

I thanked her warmly, and felt that a great weight had been taken off my mind, and was grateful to find that I was not quite friendless.

That evening I was sitting in Mrs. Hewett's cosy room drinking tea—she had insisted upon my doing so, as she thought it was not good for me to be moping, as she styled it, alone—when a double rap came to the door that made me quite nervous, unaccountably so in fact.

A moment more and the neat little housemaid entered with a card, saying,—

"A gentleman to see you, miss."

I looked at it, and my heart gave a great bound when I saw the name of "Dawlish;" and I was on the point of refusing to see him, when it flashed across my mind that he might be the bearer of news from home.

"Show the gentleman into my room," I said, suppressing all emotion in my voice by a great effort lest Mrs. Hewett should observe it.

Excusing myself, I walked slowly towards my apartment trying to collect my thoughts for the coming interview, which might tax both mind and body to the uttermost.

He was standing at the window when I entered, and turned to greet me, saying,—

"Pardon my intrusion, Mrs. Garland, and do not, I pray, misjudge my motives."

"Why are you here?" I asked, icily. "Is it to undo your cruel work? If it is I can forgive you everything."

"Why do you fear me?" he asked; "have I molested you since our last interview?"

"Why should you?"

"But I have not, though I knew your address all along. I even took the trouble to ascertain the alias you have assumed, so that I might not embarrass you by asking for Mrs. Garland."

"Your explanation is satisfactory so far," I replied, coldly; "but it does not account for your visit; and let me ask how can my movements concern you? If my husband is content to let me remain unmolested why should not you? I must frankly tell you, Mr. Dawlish, even if I become painfully rude, that I should be glad if I never saw your face again."

"Still mistrustful," he said, with a sigh; "many women would not treat the advances of a true friend as you have mine."

"Was it friendship," I retorted, "that prompted your advances, or that dared to speak to me, the wife of an honourable gentleman, of love?"

"Honourable, indeed," he said, with a shrug and a deprecatory smile that meant more than words could convey.

"Eustace Garland," I said, proudly, "can look the world in the face without flinching."

"Indeed! But do you think he dare confront you after what he has done and is still doing?"

"Resentment has made him unjust; but he would scorn to treat me basely."

"You think so? Let me undeceive you. He is now taking steps to free himself from his tie, because—"

"Well," I said, with faltering tongue, dreading to hear what was to follow.

"Allow me to place a chair for you," he said, with respectful solicitude.

Having done so, and after seating himself, he continued,—

"I would rather not be the bearer of news that cannot fail to pain you; I would rather cut off my hand than inflict such a blow upon you of all women in the world."

"This suspense is becoming intolerable," I said, "let me know the worst at once."

"Still waters run deep," Mrs. Garland, and you are not the first woman who has trusted a man in the fulness of her love; your husband has found someone to console him."

I listened to these words with marvellous composure, for they seemed to throw a light upon my husband's conduct; first, in almost forcing me into the society of the man who now spoke to me; next, in his assumed frenzy of jealousy; and lastly, in his cruel indifference as to my fate.

"It is bitter news," I said, "but I freely for-

give him; pray leave me now, Mr. Dawlish, for, indeed, I am fit society for no one."

In a moment he was at my feet, winding his arms around me, and saying passionately,—

"Mabel, can nothing move you to throw off your allegiance to that man, not even such a love as mine? Oh! my darling! why do you refuse the happiness which is within your grasp to live on the shadowy, unsatisfying past; why do you not show him that you are not a slave to suffer in silence at his cruel bidding? Oh! my love! let him do his worst, and be my wife, my queen, my very own, my earthly treasure."

Although I felt his clinging arms around me, and his hot breath upon my cheek, and knew that he was devouring me with passionate glances, I did not repulse him as I would have done had not my heart been so bitter; but I never contemplated yielding to the fiery temptation with which he was assailing me.

I was aroused from my bitter abstraction of mind by hearing a thin, quavering voice singling in the street, "Home, sweet home."

This old familiar ballad awakened me out of my state of lethargy and brought back home scenes to my distracted memory, and filled my mind with a sacred joy.

"Mabel, darling, speak to me," he cried.

These words sounded in my ears like a serpent's hiss, and exerting all my strength, I tore myself from his grasp and hurled him backwards, saying, as he lay prone,—

"Coward! vile tempter! your touch is pollution to me; whatever my husband is guilty of I shall always prove true to the memory of my love for him, and keep myself, as a wife should, pure and unspotted, with no scornful finger to point at her, or to call the blush of shame to her cheek. God and remember that even a poor defenceless woman, such as you have made of me, has a shield in her honour that protects her from such a scoundrel as you."

"Twice have I come to you as a friend," he almost hissed, as he stood before me with pallid face and glowing eyes, "the next time we meet it shall be as enemies; it is war to the knife, and you have provoked it."

The next moment he was gone, and I felt relieved from the presence of a loathsome object that had paralyzed my brain and filled my soul with horror.

Now that all danger had passed, I sat down and pondered over his words, trying to analyze the past, bringing into review the minutest details of my husband's conduct during the period of our married life, and it comforted me to know that, up to the time of Dawlish's advent on the scene, neither in word nor deed had Eustace shown that his love had decreased.

In three days' time I was located with Mrs. Delaney, for whom I had taken a great fancy, which she apparently reciprocated.

## CHAPTER VI.

I was delighted with my new home, not only on account of its surroundings, but because of the peace that came to me there.

It was a pretty house, situated exactly opposite the Regent's park.

Everything in it betrayed the refined taste of a gentlewoman, which Mrs. Delaney decidedly was. She had a few eccentricities of a harmless kind, such as a fondness for parrots and cats, her favourite being a nasty, vicious monkey, which I took good care to give a wide berth to.

This was, indeed, a haven of rest, and I determined to remain there until the clouds in the horizon of my life were dispersed by the sun of my husband's love and affection, which, despite appearances, I never despaired of regaining.

One morning Mrs. Delaney came into my sitting-room with an open letter in her hand, saying, gaily,—

"Captain Garth is coming, my dear, to day."

"You forget, dear madam, that I have not yet the honour of knowing the gentleman," I remarked, with a smile.

"Of course, how stupid of me," she replied; "but Harry is such a dear fellow, and I love him so, and he has such a host of friends that I take it for granted that everybody knows him."

"Your praises quite make me long to see this paragon," I said, laughing.

"You had better look after your heart, then, my dear Mabel, for, like all officers, he is a sad dog for flirting with the ladies; but after all, he has a good heart, and is the soul of honour itself, or I should not be so proud to own him as my nephew."

A sad dreamy look came over my face, as I thought of how little she knew of my being safe in the keeping of the man I loved, my dear Eustace, who, perhaps, at the moment was thinking of me, and wondering, as I often sat and wondered, why it was that such a seemingly impassable gulf had separated us, perhaps for ever.

"Excuse me, my dear," said Mrs. Delaney, "I know you will pardon me when I tell you that my motive is not to pry into the secrets of your life, but there is a far-away look in your face at times which makes me think you are pining after something which must have been very dear to you."

I turned pale with apprehension lest she should have guessed my secret, and a strong impulse came over me to tell her everything, and to throw myself on her compassion.

But I restrained myself, and merely said,—

"It is a trick of mine, my dear madam, which I learnt in my childhood; believe me I am very happy and contented."

Placing her hand affectionately on my head, she said,—

"I am an old woman, and can claim the privilege of my years. I have seen that look in the face of others too often to be deceived as to its meaning; if you have no mother let me take her place for the moment and confide in me; you will be the happier for it, and, perhaps, I can help you to bear your trial more bravely."

My heart went out to this truly womanly woman, and, for the moment, I was disposed to confide in her; but the sound of a hansom pulling up at the door, followed by a cossacker, a regular performance on the knocker, which no stranger or mere acquaintance would dare to indulge in, brought me both to our feet and made the old lady say,—

"That's my Harry," as her face lit up with smiles, which seemed to smooth away the lines and furrows left by time, and to make her face look beautiful and almost youthful.

My opportunity was gone, and never came again in so friendly a form.

All was now pleasant bustle, and it was a touching sight to see the loving warmth and tender affection with which the dear old dame greeted her stalwart, bronzed nephew, as she kissed him, holding him close to her heart, while she cried for very joy.

"There, there, aunt, if you don't release me, there will be nothing left of poor me," this as he looked at me with an expression of comical confusion on his handsome face, which bore an impress of true nobility of soul.

Seeing me about to retire he said,—

"You are driving the young lady away, aunt; will you not introduce me?"

"Certainly, Harry; this is my young friend and companion, Miss Renford; I have already spoken of you to her."

After the introduction was over he said,—

"I hope we shall be good friends, Miss Renford. I am about to take up my quarters here for some time, and shall have to trespass very often on your kindness, I fear; I have been so used of late to roughing it in camp and field that I am hardly fit for ladies' society."

I made a few commonplace remarks, and very soon he and I were established on a friendly footing which, in other cases, comes only after the growth of years.

A fortnight after Captain Garth's arrival his aunt was confined to her room with her old enemy rheumatism, which cast the duties of hostess entirely on my shoulders, and threw him and me very much into each other's society, a circumstance I did not regret except for one thing—his manner showed me that friendship was merging into a warmer feeling that betrayed itself in the inflexion of his voice, in his eyes, which were full of a tender light, and in his attentions generally.

This pained me very much, because I knew



that I could not reciprocate his love, which, like a flower, grew daily under the sunshine of my smiles, and the many little charming ways that become a part of the very life of every woman of education and refinement.

Only a woman can detect the growth of affection for her in a man's heart, nor was I an exception to the rule.

When we sang together in the now long but pleasant evenings, with a cheerful fire burning in the grate, and the perfume of exotics perfuming the room, and imparting a delicious languor to the senses, I have felt his hand tremble when it came in contact with mine, and his voice became as soft and gentle as a woman's in its cadence—sure signs these that the heart is more involved than the intellect.

When Mrs. Delancy was sufficiently recovered to take exercise in the open air, the captain proposed to take us for a drive.

It was a bright warm day for October, and we started about eleven o'clock, all cheerful and happy, and partaking of the brightness and gaiety of nature.

Mrs. Delancy sat opposite me, her silvery white hair shading her forehead, and imparting a dignity to her face that only comes when years and the impress of a well-spent life have set their seal upon the human countenance.

Never before had I noticed the firmness expressed in the lines of the well-cut mouth, and the contour of the chin, which bespoke an inflexible will and determination of purpose.

We soon left the metropolis and were bowling at a steady pace through the rural suburbs leading along the Thames Valley.

It was one of those rare October days when summer seems to come back again to see how the world looks under the approaching reign of winter.

We dashed past Richmond and Twickenham, in full view, at times, of the glistening river, and soon came in sight of quaint old Hampton, on thence to Kempton Park.

Every foot of the road was familiar to me, for I was approaching my dear old home, rendered sacred to me by domestic joys, and hallowed by the sharp sting of sorrow.

Arrived at the boundary of the park, the captain went at a slower pace to rest the horses.

I was glad to see that Mrs. Delancy was dozing, and not likely to see the varying expression of my tell-tale face, which flushed and paled alternately, and to know that I was equally as safe from observation on the part of the captain, who was driving.

I heard the neigh of a pony, and looking saw the dear black muzzle of "Little Beauty" thrust over the palings, as if to greet its quondam mistress.

I was glad to see that my little pet looked fat and sleek, and well cared for, a fact I felt grateful for to Eustace.

A little further on stood our house, with its grand old trees and shrubberies, looking glorious in the sunshine, and there was the gate where my husband used to watch for my coming when I was returning from a friendly visit in the neighbourhood.

Someone was standing there now, and I shrank back instinctively into the corner of the carriage lest it should be my husband.

But when I dared to look I saw it was only Deborah, whose quick eye recognised me, and to whom I bowed in return.

There came a few short barks, then a bounding leap, and Juno was racing after the carriage, which now resumed the old pace.

I longed to caress my favourite and faithful friend, but dared not even recognise her, as she continued to bark joyously while she kept up the chase.

Just before we reached the "Red Lion" Hotel, which had proved so unfortunate to me, Captain Garth looked round, and said,—

"Ladies, we will put up her to bait the horses, and refresh ourselves."

I did not dare to express any objection to this proposal, at first, but standing on the steps was Mr. Dawlish, chatting to the landlord.

Rendered desperate, I said,—

"Would you mind driving on a little farther, Captain Garth, the air is so delicious!"

"With pleasure, Mrs. Renford," he gallantly replied, as he gently whipped the horses.

I had screened my face with my sunshade, and felt secure from recognition.

I heard a whistle, and then Dawlish called to Juno, who, it would appear, paid no attention to him, but still followed me, for I heard her barking just behind us.

I had passed through a trying ordeal safely, and was thankful.

We halted at an hotel near Walton for quite an hour, where Juno could no longer be repressed, but leapt upon and fondled me in a way that attracted the attention of my companions, who, however, were too well bred to make any allusion to the fact.

"Why, what a lovely creature," said Mrs. Delancy, as she patted its noble head; "it must have followed the carriage, and I fear someone is grieving for you, darling," she added.

"It's a valuable animal, too," remarked the captain, "and has been petted by ladies."

I strolled into the garden after lunch, leaving my companions indoors, when, of course, I was followed by Juno, who evidently thought that old times had come again for her, poor thing.

I sat in an arbour over which climbing plants had been trained in luxuriant profusion, and Juno laid her head in my lap as I talked to her of her master, and of the dear old home, till the tears welled into my eyes, and she licked my hands, as if in sympathy.

"Oh, my dear doggie," I said, as I laid my tired head on hers, "what would I not give if you could only answer my questions?"

I was lost in a reverie of the past, quite oblivious of time or passing events, when I heard Captain Garth say,—

"Miss Renford, we are about to start," and looking up I saw him standing before me, gazing upon what must have been to him a curious scene.

"I am ready," I replied confusedly, as I rose and took his arm.

When we were ready to start, and Juno stood by the carriage wagging her tail, and looking inquiringly into my face as if to ask, "where are we bound for next?"

Mrs. Delancy said,—

"Oh, there's the dog; what are we to do with it? We cannot take it up to town with us; had we not better give it in charge of the landlord, as probably he may find its owner, as it cannot be far from its home?"

Captain Garth looked at me with a smile of inquiry; but I said nothing, as I did not wish to attract attention to myself in the matter.

"I suppose that would be advisable," he remarked, as I thought, somewhat regretfully, from being aware of my partiality for the dog.

Juno was handed over to the care of the landlord, with instructions to take great care of it until its owner could be found.

I saw the captain slip some money into the hands of the ostler, and heard him say,—

"Be kind to her, my man."

As we drove away I looked back, and saw her held by the collar, and the man evidently had no easy task in holding her back.

We turned a curve in the road, and I thought I had seen the last of my favourite, when I heard a succession of triumphal barks, as the dear creature came bounding along and overtook us.

"How extraordinary," said Mrs. Delancy, "the dog must be bewitched."

The captain laughed, and said,—

"The only thing to be done now is to take it to town with us."

"Will it not be too far for it to run?" I suggested, meekly, while the captain looked over his shoulder at me, as if enjoying the fun.

"It's too big, Harry, to travel with us in the carriage, you know," the old lady said, in a tone of mild protest.

"Certainly it is, my dear aunt, but I can make room for it by the side of me."

This arrangement seemed to please all parties, especially my pet, who jumped with alacrity, and made herself comfortable in her new quarters.

Presently, I saw her black muzzle peeping over at me, and her soft eyes fixed inquisitively on my face.

I smiled, and she, accepting it as an invitation to join me, scrambled over the seat and alighted on Mrs. Delancy's sunshade, and came sprawling into her lap.

I shall never forget Captain Garth's kindness in pacifying the terrified, wrathful old lady.

The matter ended by Juno being allowed to sit with me.

On reaching home there was another commotion, of which my poor doggie was the innocent cause, for the cats and the monkey flew at her, the parrots screamed, and the servant had all his work to do to restore peace and order.

## CHAPTER VII.

My life went on very quietly for another month, during which the presence of Juno was a great comfort to me.

Captain Garth was very kind; too much so, in fact, for his future peace of mind.

One evening I was sitting alone in the gloaming, when he entered the room and seated himself at my side.

"Miss Renford," he said, "I am going away, and will be absent two months, or more; I shall feel very lonely, for you have become part of my life."

"You must not say that," I replied, with averted face.

"But I do, because it is the truth; I have never been happier than in your society, and it pains me to tear myself away from it, even for a day. What, then, must I feel when it is extended to months?"

"Dear Captain Garth," I said, "indeed I am sorry to hear you place such stress on my poor society. I have been very happy, but it is the lot of humanity to be severed from those we esteem and respect."

"But is it not painful to part with those we love?"

"Oh! if you only knew how painful your words are," I thought, "you would not probe me thus to the quick."

"You do not answer," he continued; "perhaps you have never loved."

I kept silent intentionally, lest any words of mine should give him encouragement.

"Speak to me, Mabel," he said, taking my hand; "Why are you so cold? Cannot you see that I love you?"

"Oh no, not 'Forebear!' I cried. "Spare me."

"Spare you from what?" he exclaimed; "Is my love then a thing of such torture to you that you need shrink from it, and cry my mercy? You cannot be so cruel; let me have one word of encouragement, bid me hope, and I will leave without saying another word on this subject."

"Dear Captain Garth, indeed, my heart is not mine to give. I am deeply grieved that I have ever led you to believe otherwise."

"What mystery is this?" he said, hoarsely.

"Is there anything I ought to know?"

Then, seeing the tears in my eyes, he said,—

"Forgive me, if in my heart's anguish I have caused you pain; I had no right to ask the question. Consider it withdrawn, but let me ask whether the barrier you say exists cannot be removed by patient waiting on my part, such as Jacob exercised for Rachel of old?"

"I dare not bid you hope," I cried; "if you only knew how your words wound me you would out of the very love you say you bear me press me no further."

"One more question," he said, "and I am done. I chanced to overhear certain words you addressed to Juno in the arbour; had these reference to the name Dawlish on her collar?"

"No," I cried passionately, thrown off my guard by my hatred of the owner of that name. "I despise and abhor, nay, loathe him beyond the power of utterance."

"I am satisfied, though my heart is breaking; but I shall always esteem you as a friend—as something dearer, in fact, as a sister."

After a pause, he added,—

"Let me give you one word of advice. My aunt, though as kind hearted a woman as ever

breathed, cannot bear a mystery; confide in her, and you will make her your friend for life.

The next moment he was gone, leaving me to ponder over his words.

Had I acted upon his advice then and there I would have spared myself much misery. But I deferred doing so till next day, when, alas! it was too late—words that have been uttered by thousands when racked by the bitter pangs of remorse.

On the following morning Mrs. Delancy did not come down to breakfast; thinking her unwell I ascended to her room, and knocked and was bidden to come in, and when I entered she said,—

"Miss Renford, I was about to send for you to tell you that I have received a letter from an anonymous correspondent, containing certain allegations, which I would like to give you the opportunity of refuting."

"This is some of Dawlish's work," I thought. "He warned me of his enmity, and has kept his word."

"Perhaps you would like to read the letter?" he continued; "if so, you can. Here it is."

"Mrs. Delancy, I can assure you, on the word of a lady, that my character is unsullied," I replied, wounded dignity adding firmness to my tone. "And I am surprised that you should call upon me to refute an anonymous libel."

Her face flushed under the rebuke, but she said,—

"I am not to be dictated to by you, Miss Renford. I took you into my service on the recommendation of Mrs. Hewett; I have, therefore, every right to ask you to give me some satisfactory account of your antecedents, when certain matters are brought under my notice, even anonymously. And let me add—this with some severity of manner—"that it is an unusual experience to find a lady of your age so reticent about her past life, and that I am of opinion there is no smoke without a little fire."

"You have no right," I retorted, haughtily, "to pry into my private affairs; if you chose to accept Mrs. Hewett as a reference that exonerated me, especially as I presume I have given you every satisfaction. Nor do I intend to gratify what must appear, even to you, a morbid curiosity. I shall leave your house at once, Mrs. Delancy, and without asking any favour at your hands."

Without waiting for a reply I walked out of the room, and commenced pecking up my things.

Whilst thus engaged the maid handed me a letter from Mrs. Delancy, which I opened and read as follows:—

"DEAR MISS RENFORD,—

"Had you given me an opportunity I could have proved to you that I was not actuated by mere curiosity in asking you to confide in me. Possibly you are aware of my nephew's affection for you, and of his intention to ask you to become his wife; this much I know, for he spoke to me openly of the matter.

"Cannot you understand the meaning of all that passed between us this morning? It is not too late to place us on the old footing of affectionate friendship; if you still refuse me your confidence of course we must part.

"In that case I enclose you a cheque for two quarters' salary, which you are entitled to.

"Ever your friend and well-wisher,  
"CLARA DELANCY."

I felt that she was right, but that it was impossible for me to remain any longer in the house, and I wrote her to that effect, bidding her good-bye, and thanking her for many kindnesses.

I was out again in the wide world, alone, homeless, and friendless, and with my courage almost gone, and with a bitter feeling against the man whom I knew had caused it all.

I took rooms at Baywater, as it seemed a likely locality for the project I had in view, which was to obtain music pupils.

I expended a portion of my money in the printing of circulars, and in advertising, and was surprised to find how costly these preliminary expenses were, and how futile, for week succeeded week without any result.

In all my loneliness, and with poverty staring me in the face, I was comforted by the loving companionship of my doggie, who had followed me when I left Mrs. Delancy's.

What I so much dreaded came to pass at last; I had to part with my jewellery bit by bit, until even this source was nearly exhausted.

A rift appeared in the cloud of my despair, for I procured the situation of assistant in a co-operative store, my duties being to keep books and take cash.

The wages were small but permanent, and I began to think my prospects were getting brighter; but even here it required all my tact to keep me from offending the manager, not because I was not in his good graces, but the reverse.

He had given me the position in preference to scores of others, because of my good looks and ladylike deportment, as I afterwards discovered.

I soon perceived that he had marked me out for special attention, which I at first put down to his good nature, and a desire to make me proficient in my duties. But my eyes became open after awhile, and I saw that I would have to leave soon to escape from what was fast becoming an intolerable position.

But fate ordained that dear Juno should bring this about sooner than I anticipated. She was a great favourite with my landlady and her family, who undertook to look after her while I was at business.

But one morning she gave them the slip and followed me stealthily to the stores.

I was a little late on this occasion, and the manager, who was now very ungracious to me, spoke sharply, nay, roughly to me, all of which I bore meekly, because of my dependent position.

I mounted to my desk, when I heard a loud crash, and on looking round saw Juno, who, in wagging her tail, had swept off a lot of glass.

The manager took a stick to chastise my pet; but on seeing her formidable array of teeth he thought himself that prudence was the better part of valour, and did not carry out his intentions.

On hearing that the dog belonged to me he became so abusive that I put on my things and left the place, forgetting my week's wages, as a set off against the breakages.

It may appear strange that I should suffer as I had done rather than write to my husband, or employ the offices of a mediator between us.

But I was too proud to stoop to ask forgiveness for an offence I had never committed; besides, I thought it was his place to take some trouble to find me out, especially when Mr. Dawlish had found this such an easy matter.

I did not care either to write or see Dora, because I was ashamed to confess my needy circumstances to her.

Poverty is a great stimulus to exertion, and I cast about me for employment, and tried directing envelopes; but the remuneration was so small that it did not pay me for the trouble, in addition to which my health began to suffer from the close confinement.

I then answered an advertisement offering to send particulars by which anyone could earn two pounds a week and upwards, at their home, on receipt of stamps, which I, of course, enclosed, although I hardly knew how to afford the outlay.

In due course I received the promised particulars, which told me how I could make blacking, and where I could obtain the materials at the cheapest rate.

I need hardly state that I put the interesting paper behind the fire, where I stirred it down vigorously, almost viciously, with the poker.

I was really desperate now, and did not know where to turn for help.

My face grew thinner and paler, a fact which came under the commiserating notice of my landlady.

It was a bitter, cheerless day in December, and I had scarcely a spark of fire in the grate, where I sat shivering, almost envying Juno's indifference to the cold, when there was a tap at the door, and my landlady entered with a tray containing a basin of soup and some bread, saying,—

"Pardon the liberty, miss, but this is so nice that I thought you would like to taste it."

Before I could decline she left the room. My pride rebelled against accepting food from her, but at last the cravings of hunger overcame my scruples, and I felt all the better for putting my feelings in my pocket for once, and so did my dear doggie, who shared the meal with me.

The landlady's daughter, quite a young woman, now entered to chat with me, and romp with Juno, as was her wont.

"I wish I knew of someone that could take the place of a friend of mine in the chorus at the Royal Theatre," she said musingly.

"Do you think I could?" I asked eagerly.

"Yes, I am sure of that," she answered. "I am going there now for rehearsal, and you might come with me to see the chorus-master, who asked me only last night if I knew of anybody; the salary is a pound a week and all found."

We were soon making our way to the theatre, and I was fortunate enough in getting the coveted vacancy.

My life was now somewhat happier than it had been for weeks past, and I began to regain my strength and good looks.

One night, never to be forgotten, I saw my old enemy Dawlish in the stalls, but hoped that my altered appearance in my stage dress would disguise my identity from his searching eyes.

I had suffered so much through his cruel machinations that I now feared and hated him more than ever.

If I lost my present position nothing but starvation would stare me in the face, and yet I had done nothing to incur his enmity, for had he been a true man he would have respected my persistent rejection of his questionable advances.

From that night he was an habitu  of the place, a fact I endeavoured to account for by the magnificence of the spectacle, which was truly imposing.

One night I was alarmed by his presence behind the scenes, when he had the effrontery to address me in a manner that brought all my pride up in arms.

"Mr. Dawlish," I said, "surely I am suffering humiliation enough in being reduced to the alternative of earning an honest living in this humble way without your adding to it by your insults; if you dare to take such a liberty again I shall complain to the manager."

"Still untamed," he said, with a quiet sneer. "You surely need a friend now, Mabel!"

"Yes, but do not expect to find one in you. I do not forget how you have hounded me from a comfortable home at Mrs. Delancy's, and yet you talk of befriending me! I suppose your next step will be to get me dismissed from here!"

"No; by Heaven you cruelly misjudge me, Mabel. If money can serve you, pray accept a loan from me to any amount you like to name."

The stage manager happened to pass at this moment, and I appealed to him for protection; but he merely smiled, and patting me on the shoulder in a fatherly way, said,—

"You will get used to that in time, my dear; this gentleman is well known to me, and means no harm."

Oh! the power of wealth to subdue everything to its wishes. No wonder that humanity worships it as a god, and wears its smiles, whilst fearing its frown.

I could have cried with vexation and pride, but had to submit, and to go through my part with smiles wreathing my face when my heart was wrung to the core with misery.

Mr. Dawlish did not persecute me in this instance, for the manager took notice of me, and my salary was increased; but misfortune dogged my steps as if Heaven had forsaken me, and my pride and obstinacy were to be humbled in the very dust.

Illness overtook me, and I lost my voice through a cold caught through walking home through the snow.

But I battled bravely, attending to my duties till my cough became so troublesome that the chorus-master had to give me notice, and on Christmas-eve I left the theatre, broken-hearted, wretched, and despairing.



Just outside the stage door I saw Mr. Dawlish, who spoke to me kindly, but I repulsed him. My hoarse voice seemed to terrify him, for he said,—

"Good heavens! Mrs. Garland, what a dreadful cold you have, and how ill you look; let me implore you to see a doctor and at once; remain here while I procure a cab."

My appearance seemed to bring out the better part of his nature, and to cause him remorse for having brought me to this almost abject condition.

But my heart was steeled against him, and I rushed across the road and eluded him.

I was nearly reckless now, and as I walked aimlessly through the well-lighted streets, and saw the shops with their array of Christmas fare, I felt there was no place in life for such as I, who was homeless, friendless, almost penniless, and well-nigh sick unto death.

I felt that to prolong the bitter struggle with misfortune was more than I could accomplish; it was then that a dreadful temptation assailed me to put an end to it all by making a hurried exit off life's scene.

The carol singers and waits were about, but their cheerful strains only hardened my heart.

It seemed to me a mockery to sing of "Peace on earth, good will towards men," when I was persecuted, driven from home, to die the death of a wretched suicide, for such was my fixed intention.

The bells, too, were ringing out their merry peals, that sounded clear and full on the frosty air; but the Christmas chimes brought no comfort to my weary soul.

As I was passing a gin-palace with its blaze of light, gilding, and plate glass, some men who stood outside, near one of the doors, must have noticed my wan, deathly-looking face, for one of them, who had a kind though a rough manner, asked me whether I wouldn't take "something warm" that cold night.

I hesitated for a moment, half inclined to accept the offer, but the thought flashed across my numbed brain that I was a lady, and would die as such.

With a "no, thank you," I walked on, and soon came in sight of the lights of Westminster-bridge.

From the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament "Big Ben" tolled out sonorously the midnight hour.

It sounded to me like my funeral knell, deep and solemn and mystic, and befitting the ears of one who was approaching the portals of the grave.

I reached the centre of the bridge, and leant against the buttress, silently contemplating the cold gliding waters which were to form my shroud.

Although I intended to commit a dreadful act I prayed fervently that Heaven would forgive my enemies, and clear my name in the sight of my husband.

At this supreme moment, when earth seemed slipping from under my feet, something cold but soft was thrust against my hand, and I heard a whine.

It was Juno, who must have followed me from the theatre (where I had taken her) along the streets to the bridge, and who now claimed my sympathy and loving caresses by this appeal.

I forgot everything but my love for this faithful, unselfish friend—cold, misery, and, best of all, there vanished from my mind the tempting thought of suicide.

Kneeling down I threw my arms about her neck and wept for very joy, whilst my lips moved in silent prayer of gratitude for my merciful escape.

My face was upturned, and the light from the lamp fell full upon it.

Footsteps approached, and I heard a voice say, "Good Heavens! it's Mabel."

I knew the speaker was Harry Belton, and I tried to reply, but my tongue failed me, and I fell back unconscious.

When I regained consciousness I looked about me in wondering surprise.

"Surely," I thought, "I must be dreaming,

for I am back in my dear old room at Elm-hurst."

A light footstep approached my bed, and I saw dear Eustace standing there with, oh! such a sweet smile on his face, which looked thin and worn.

"A merry Christmas to you, Mab, darling," he said, with a voice that trembled with emotion, as he bent down and kissed me tenderly.

"But is this real?" I asked.

"Yes, darling wife. I humbly crave your forgiveness on this holy day, for indeed I have sinned grievously against you."

Drawing his head down I laid it on my cheek, and our tears—happy ones now—mingled together, while the bells rang out a merry Christmas benison.

We formed a happy trio, if not a merry one, Eustace, Harry Belton, and I; and Juno was not the least important personage in our now united home.

Deborah went wild with joy at my return, and kept making excuses to come into the room to have another look at me, as if she was afraid I would vanish; these visits usually ended on her part with a good cry.

While Eustace and Harry went downstairs to enjoy a cigar I slept with my arm round the neck of my faithful friend and preserver, dear Juno.

It was some days before I could induce Harry to tell me the sequel to my adventures on that night when he found me on Westminster-bridge; the dear old fellow first of all wrapped me in his overcoat, and then, hailing a passing cab, had me driven to Waterloo, where he caught the midnight train to my home, Juno accompanying us, of course.

My husband told me how he had tried in vain to trace me, and that he even appealed to Dawlish to help him, but he professed ignorance of my whereabouts.

It appears that after Dawlish and I parted at the theatre on Christmas-eve he wrote a letter to Eustace, freely admitting my innocence and his own baseness, and imploring him to trace me, if possible, as my state of health was very critical, adding that he was going abroad, and would remain there.

This welcome epistle reached my husband on Christmas-morning, when I was safe once more under his roof-tree.

Twelve months have passed, and Christmas has come round again, and finds me the happy mother of a darling boy, the very image of his dear father.

He is lying in his dainty cradle with Juno watching over his slumbers, and giving an occasional look into my face as much as to say, "You needn't fear, dear mistress, I am here to guard your treasure as I did you just twelve months and a day ago."

She wears another collar now, which Eustace placed round her neck with his own hands; it bears this inscription, "To the faithful guardian of my dear wife."

Captain and Mrs. Belton, *née* Dora Winton, are spending Christmas with us, and we make a merry party, full of peace and goodwill towards all men.

The following day my husband said, sadly,—

"Dear Mabel, I know you have forgiven Dawlish; poor fellow, he has gone to his account."

"Dead!" I cried.

"Yes; he was missing for some time, and his remains were found by some guides in the Alps."

My trials are now over, and I can look back with thankfulness to the lessons which adversity taught me.

Neither my husband nor I have forgotten the few humble friends who did their best to help me in my sore trouble.

When the nights lengthen, and he and I sit at the cheerful hearth, with our boy on his knee, and Juno at my side, I often speak in subdued accents of the events which have been recounted in these pages as "Triumphant at last."

[THE END.]

## AS IT FELL UPON A DAY.

—201—

### CHAPTER XV.

ELEANOR FOSTER had no settled plan in her mind as to where she would go when she walked away from Rachel's big house. She had a certain amount of money, enough to sustain her for the next few weeks, and it was immaterial to her where she was lodged so long as nothing of her sudden change should reach her father's ears.

She shuddered as she pictured to herself the sort of vulgar triumph her step-mother would enjoy could she only know the evil that had befallen the girl she had from the first disliked and abused! What suffering could not that shrewish tongue mete out to the kind careworn man whom Eleanor had loved with no common love, and who had ever been so proud and fond of his eldest child?

No, at all hazards, no matter what it cost her, she must shield her father from knowledge of the truth. She felt only too sure that Rachel would regard this wish of hers as sacred. There was no one save Giles Hamilton who would be guilty of the cruelty of putting before John Foster the story of his girl's dishonour; and him Eleanor did not fear in this respect. For to let loose the righteous anger of a father would be to imperil his own reputation, possibly his own safety. He had worked only too subtly and successfully with Rachel; but there would be something more needed than mere idle words and assertions if he tried to work harm with her father. Besides, there was nothing to be gained from so doing; doubtless the moment he heard she had gone from Rachel's house his revenge would be satisfied. He held her in so much contempt apparently—he knew how weak and helpless she was to do him any real harm, and having taken the first step against her he no doubt considered his position quite secure.

"Had I spoken first; had I told Rachel all, how different things would have been now!" Eleanor thought to herself with bitter sadness as she toiled along in the early morning streets; everything was not yet as it was. She knew it was futile to attempt to get a lodging for herself at this hour.

She must eat something and let the morning grow before she commenced her search for a temporary home. She was painfully weak, and felt very ill, and the sense of desolation that pressed upon her was greater at this moment than it had been even in the past.

Life with her of late had been so soft and charming a thing, she had felt herself so guarded, so loved, that her present exile was doubly hard to bear.

When her great trouble had come upon her in the past she had been better braced up to meet it than now. Her life as a governess had been a hard laborious one, with nothing to give her hope or gladness but that treacherous sympathy with which a vicious idle man had wooed her away from her pride and her quiet resignation to her lot, and had brought into her heart instead the fire of a love that was so strong—of a faith in this love so great, she had been ready to sacrifice anything for it.

Her halcyon dream had been so short-lived, the awakening had been so swift, everything had happened so quickly, that Eleanor had not had time to have grown used to luxury or the sweetness of loving care and thought.

Now it was different, and, paradoxical as it may seem when the circumstances of both cases be remembered, it was yet undoubtedly true that she suffered even more in this moment of wrenching herself from Rachel's home and companionship than she had done when she had fled from that Paris hotel carrying an everlasting burden of grief and shame with her.

In the first instance she had trusted blindly, wholeheartedly, and her faith had wrecked her; in the second, she accused herself of having won faith and love in a dishonest manner, and the wrong she had done seemed equal to even that great wrong that had been done to her.

Almost mechanically she made her way to the big railway-station near at hand. It was open,

and porters were busy sweeping and sprinkling the floors with water.

Eleanor crouched back on one of the forms. Here she could sit as long as she liked and be questioned by no one.

In a little while the refreshment bar would be open, and she could get herself a cup of tea and swallow food of some kind.

She had a fragile, worn look as she sat there, but she attracted no marked attention; people were beginning to come and go, but they were all in a hurry; the book-stall was being arrayed for the day; she was merely an item in the business of the place, and as such had her proper share in the numerous nonentities that crowd a railway-station.

The temporary rest was grateful to her, and the throbbing in her head grew less as she sat and let a sort of lethargy creep over her.

The influence of the narcotic had left her faint and rather stupid. She needed food, though the very thought seemed impossible to her.

The matter that filled her brain was neither definite nor painful as it had been; she drifted into a sort of waking dream, and the odds and ends of passengers, mostly of the working classes, that came and sat on the bench from time to time gave her cursory glances of curiosity as if the sight of this unmistakable lady in her neat garments and her white set face was an interesting one.

The stream of humanity that in a very little while swept past her to and from the gates of the different platforms all seemed to Eleanor as part of her dream.

She saw the men and women go in front of her like so many phantoms; the suburban trains were arriving quickly now, disgorging their usual crowds of toilers—men, for the most part—all with the morning newspaper under their arm; and the pipe or cigarette in their mouths.

Some of these had a sharp glance ready for Eleanor as they passed her, her gown (one of several Rachel had given her) was so remarkably well-cut, her style was so good, and her face so white and impassive that from most of the men who saw her she demanded more than the ordinary attention of eyes.

The sight of her came to one of these arrivals as something that was a mixture of joy, surprise, and pain; that pain that belongs to a hopeless affection.

This particular young man left a train companion, and came swiftly up to the girl sitting so quietly by herself.

"Eleanor!" he said involuntarily; then as she gave a great start and looked up at him in a sudden anguish of awakened senses Philip Robinson added quickly, "I hope you don't mind my speaking to you, Eleanor; I—I never stopped to think. I saw you; it was a great surprise; and I came up at once. Are you going away? Are you alone?"

Eleanor's heart was beating wildly.

Of all people in the wide world this man was the very last she could have wished to meet in this hour; it was not that she feared him—indeed, in a strange, wholly inexplicable way, she felt a rush of comfort through her chilled heart at the presence of one who, from the very first, had been unswerving in his love and devotion to her.

It was the knowledge of his close association with her home, and the remembrance of the coldness, which she had always meted out to him that made his presence so painful to her; she had often and often in her hours of sorrow recalled Philip's tender thought of her, with a pang of reproach that she should have made so poor a return for it, and with a bitter regret that she should have fallen so far below the high ideal he had formed of her nature and her attributes.

She roused herself to respond to him.

"Philip! You—you startled me. Surely it is unusual for you to be here. It—it is not near your home!"

Poor girl, she thought to herself naturally, to evade question about herself, and to let him speak of his own affairs; she should have known that the eyes of love are shrewd as well as tender.

Philip stood before her silent for a moment, his dark picturesque face that had at once attracted remark from Rachel the preceding day grew almost pale in this moment. He knew as well as if she had confessed it in words that there was some heavy trouble lying on Eleanor's heart. He had long known that there was a shadow on her life. In the few times they had met since she made her start as a governess he had seen this, and it had made his own heart ache and grow heavy too, for Eleanor was indescribably dear to him.

He began speaking after that spell of painful surprise.

"I went down to Norwood last night," he explained, "I slept there at my friend's house—they had a party!" he paused a second, and his voice, soft and almost musical, took a wistful tone. "Is there nothing I can do for you, Eleanor?" he asked; "will you not let me help you?"

Eleanor's eyes filled suddenly with tears. The man's heart would have leaped with joy could he have realized even in a small degree the sense of comfort those few brief words meant to her. She seemed to realize in that instant how shockingly weak and desolate she was, and what a great burden it was that rested on her shoulders.

Robinson could not fathom the working of her mind, but his love and sympathy let him see that there was a struggle, a doubt. He sat down beside her quietly.

"Eleanor—you are in trouble—do not deny it dear, for it is written on your face. You look so ill—you frighten me. For Heaven's sake trust me, Nell. I know you can never learn to care for me. I have shut the door on my hope. I swear you shall never hear a word from my lips that shall annoy you—only trust me, Nell, give me the small pleasure of being able to do something for you, dear!"

Eleanor's tears were rolling down her white cheeks now; she brushed them away with a trembling hand. It seemed to her that all at once a beneficent providence had sent her aid when she needed it most terribly. She had a pang of fresh remorse upon her, as she remembered how haughtily she had always turned away from this young man who, with his foreign bearing, his middle-class air, his second-rate clothes, had always offended her aesthetic taste. She had misjudged him too, she had thought him too quiet in his acceptance of her coldness. She had imagined him capable of some passionate outburst against her, and now he was sitting beside her pleading not for her love, not for anything more than to be permitted to be her friend, and give her a friend's thoughts and care. Contrasted with the man who had ruined her life Philip was distinctly plebeian, he had almost a vulgar touch about his appearance, but the goodness, the soul, the tender eager love that shone in his dark eyes was something infinitely more beautiful, more noble than it would have been possible for Giles Hamilton to have possessed even in his dreams.

She decided she would trust him.

It was an extraordinary decision to come to her, but Eleanor had a sudden instinct that her trust would not be given in vain, and that despite everything that had gone this man would act and think for her now as she could never act or think for herself.

She would trust him, but she would not, she could not confess the whole truth to him.

Her white face was dyed crimson with shame even at the mere suggestion of putting her horrible story before Philip; it would be utterly impossible for her to let him know the full truth.

But she would take him sufficiently into her confidence to let him understand the need, the imperative insistence of secrecy where her father was concerned.

She turned to him after a moment.

"You are right, Philip," she said, almost in a whisper. "I am in great trouble, and I am ill. I—I cannot tell you more than this—that circumstances have occurred to send me away from Lady Castletown's house; perhaps only for a time," the girl's heart beat more quickly as she let her hope of Rachel's generous goodness flutter into her heart. "Perhaps," with a deep sigh, "perhaps for ever. I will trust you with part of

my great trouble, Philip. You must help me to keep the truth away from dad. I—should kill myself," Eleanor cried brokenly, fiercely, "rather than let him know anything is wrong."

Philip Robinson sat motionless for a moment; the hot agony of an unconquerable jealousy had seized upon him. How was it to be otherwise? He was too much a man of the world not to read the signs on Eleanor's face, to catch the dull despair in her usually sweet voice; she was as she had first said, in heavy trouble, and that trouble lay he knew right well in the story of the love he had prayed so earnestly might be his, and which she had shut from him so resolutely.

It was by the strongest effort he could control himself sufficiently to answer her.

"It will be difficult," he said, and the sound of his voice gave Eleanor a pang; "but if it can be done, you know I will help you. Can you tell me anything more definite? What you have in your thoughts? Had you made any plan? But first, Nell—a more prosaic question—have you had any food this morning? No, I might have guessed as much. Please come with me at once, lean on my arm!"

Eleanor obeyed him like a child. It was impossible for her to turn from the comfort, the vague sweetness of his protecting care. She murmured one protest, however.

"Philip, I must not keep you. You will be late at the office."

"I will send a telegram and say I am delayed," was the immediate answer. "Please lean on me, Nell. I shall not let you speak one word more till I have seen you eat something. Why, you are a shadow! I almost doubted it was you when I came up, you looked so ill!"

He took her away from the rush of the station into an adjoining hotel, and when he had put her at a small table in a quiet corner he went to send his telegram. He was back almost instantly, and true to his word, he would not let her open her lips to speak till she had swallowed some coffee and eaten some of the fish he had deemed the best food for her.

Eleanor felt in a dream, she was so weak, and so really ill, she could not have the strength to protest against his ministrations, even if she had wanted to do so. But she was troubled on his account.

"Philip, you will be very late. Dad will be wondering what is wrong!"

He smiled half sadly.

"I am so punctual as a rule, I may be late for once with impunity."

They sat for a long time in silence when Eleanor had finished her breakfast.

It was evident the man was thinking deeply.

"You have left your clothes behind!" he queried, after a time.

Eleanor nodded her head and coloured hotly.

"I will send for them when I have settled where to go."

"Have you quarrelled with Lady Castletown?" was the next question. "Has she been unkind to you?"

Eleanor winced.

"Oh! no, no. Rachel could never be unkind."

She wrung her hands together. "Philip, it seems cruel to you, and yet I must repeat I cannot tell you all that has happened. That the story is not mine alone; there are others to remember. All I want is to find a lodging for a time; then I must wait."

She was thinking not merely of what answer Rachel would send to her letter, but of what might not be done when Sebastian Lithgow returned to London. She was quivering yet from the blow that had fallen upon her at the unexpected news of his sudden departure.

"Have you any money?" Philip asked her abruptly, when she ceased speaking.

She showed him her purse.

"I have very nearly thirty pounds, quite a little fortune," she said, with a wan smile.

"You must find lodgings as soon as possible," was his next remark. "I wish to Heaven I could take you to my mother, Nell, but—"

But Eleanor shrank back.

"Oh! no, no," she said, in an eager whisper; "it is so good of you, Philip; but I could never go to your mother, we have to think of dad."



What would he say if he knew I was in your mother's house?"

The man's dusky face took a red tinge.

He knew only too well what suggestion Mr. Foster would put upon such an arrangement, and his heart thrilled even against his hopelessness as he whispered to himself that perhaps Eleanor's great sorrow might yet lead her to seek a haven, a home in his home. Now he fell in instantly with her view.

"We will not think of it," he said, "we must find some other place. I wish I could leave you here Eleanor while I made arrangements. You do not look fit to stand, poor child."

Eleanor tried to smile.

"You do not know how strong I really am, Philip," she said, and then she flushed and grew deadly pale, as her thoughts went to those long days spent alone in the little peasant's hut in Brittany and of the stupendous courage and strength she had needed to carry her through that awful trial.

Surely, she said to herself passionately, if she could support that trouble she could meet this one also; yet as she went languidly out of the hotel with Philip, she felt that her strength was not likely to carry her very far on the hard sorrowful road she had to tread now, that it would take very little more indeed to drain the frail current of life from her altogether, and put an end to everything in the long long sleep of death!

#### CHAPTER XVI.

ANNE HUNTLEY had but little opportunity of learning her many duties at Sichester, and travelling up to London, but occasionally she paid a flying visit to the metropolis, and about a week after Rachel's sojourn at the Rectory Anne found herself starting for one of these visits.

Truth to tell, Miss Huntley was rather anxious to go for almost the first time in her life.

She had received no answer from Rachel to her last letter; neither had Lady Castletown sent her customary chat to Mrs. Langridge, and Anne was not quite able to understand the reason of this silence.

It was unlike Rachel, and it troubled her vaguely.

Moreover the news of Bastian's abrupt departure abroad had upset his mother, and Anne would have been surprised if anyone would have told her how much of the vague anxiety she felt about Rachel and her doings was connected with this absence of Bastian's.

Like Eleanor Foster, the eyes of Anne Huntley had divined into the heart of Bastian's heart, and had found his most treasured secret.

With Anne, moreover, the knowledge of Bastian's devotion to Rachel was an old, old story; she had seen it grow from the first, and as it became bigger, stronger, deeper, some fragrant and beautiful blossom that had first begun to put forth buds in Anne's own heart faded and died away utterly, till now there was only the root remaining to remind her of what had been.

Had Anne been less unhappy she might perchance have stepped in and upset her uncle's plans for Rachel's marriage.

She did make some protest; but of what use to protest, when Rachel herself, apparently, was quite a willing and consenting party?

Anne was a shrewd, clever girl, but her lovely young sister had completely deceived her in those days before the marriage with James Castletown; the love story that had been so sweet and so bitter never came to Anne's knowledge till later, and then a brilliant light had been shed upon everything, and all was explained that had been so clear.

To herself Anne never fully confessed what she had suffered in those days; she reproached herself now for her blindness, and cold and hard as she had seemed to be there was not one day of her life in which she failed to pray earnestly for the happiness of the man she loved, and the little sister who was beloved by this same man.

When Bastian was near Rachel then Anne was quite content, for she knew that though Rachel was absolutely ignorant of Bastian's love

she was yet most malleable in his hands, and always ready to be guided by his influence.

Thus, when the news of Bastian's trip came to the Rectory, together with the unusual circumstance of Rachel's prolonged silence, Anne turned for once from her parochial duties, and hastened to fulfil her aunt's periodical desire to go to London for a few days and see the fashions for themselves.

Mrs. Langridge dearly loved dress and all that belonged to it, and deep down in the depths of her gentle, coy nature lurked the spirit of excitement.

To stay for a week at an hotel and to drive about in the London streets was always a real delight to Bastian's mother.

"I shall take this opportunity of doing up his rooms, Anne," she said, when they were en route, and the question of Bastian was discussed.

"I am dreadfully grieved I shall not see my boy, I wonder why he had to go off like this! Surely one of his clerks could have gone, and I think Bastian might have run down to see me before he went, don't you, Anne?"

Anne never encouraged any grievance.

"Of course he would have come, Aunt Marian, if he had been able to do so," she said, in her blishest way; "you know Bastian by this time too well to think he would ever shirk his business!"

All the same Anne did not understand why Bastian should have gone away so abruptly; of course she knew that there was always a considerable amount of business to be negotiated for his firm in various foreign ports, but of late Bastian had seemingly handed over this portion of his business to others; and she certainly did not see why he might not have written explicitly to his mother instead of merely sending her a telegram to announce his departure.

Anne had written a brief line to Rachel telling her sister that she should be in town the following day; and when Mrs. Langridge and she were safely arrived at their old-fashioned hotel they found a quantity of beautiful flowers arranged about their room, and a very short note from Rachel bidding them both to dinner that evening.

Anne frowned as she read it; she could not have told why it was, but her sense of uneasiness about Rachel deepened as she did so, and she was now fully prepared to find that something was wrong, or at least not as right as it might have been in her sister's life at this moment.

She deposited her aunt after luncheon in the show-rooms of the sedate dressmaker and milliner who had made for Mrs. Langridge nearly all her life, and being perfectly assured her aunt would have no need of her for a couple of hours Anne took a hansom and was driven direct to Eaton-square.

"I don't want to wait till this evening," she said to herself with a restlessness that was new to her. She had arrived at a solution of the small mystery by the time she reached Rachel's house.

"Bastian must have spoken, something must have happened to break down his restraint, and he must have told her the truth; and then he must have gone away because she would not understand the position. It is not in Rachel as yet to know and value such a love as Bastian can give to a woman!" A bitter thought that was the only outlet Anne Huntley permitted to her dead and buried love dream.

As her hansom drove up to the door a very handsome mail phaeton made way for her to alight, a groom was at the horses' heads, and a man, whom at first she did not recognise, was in the driver's place looking eagerly towards the door as if expecting someone.

Anne paid her cab and went in the house very quickly; as she had got out on to the pavement she had seen the man's face, and her heart had a cold grip as she recognised Captain Hamilton.

She passed him without bestowing even a glance upon him, as she did not wish to meet him.

"Is your mistress at home?" she inquired of Matthews, the butler, who was standing at the open door with his usual imperturbable air and a dust-cloth over his arm.

Perhaps the faintest change passed over the

man's face as he realised who spoke to him. There was a wide difference, and yet a strong likeness, between Lady Castletown and Miss Huntley.

He hastened to answer.

"Her ladyship were just going out for a drive, miss," he said.

Anne went into the hall.

"I think you can close the door," she said, in her coldest way. "Lady Castletown will not start immediately."

"Who is this giving orders in my name?" cried Rachel's voice from the staircase. She came down slowly, she was looking enchantingly pretty in a grey gown with a little Quaker-like bonnet, yet even in that first instant of meeting Anne read a change in her sister's face. Rachel seemed to have grown thinner, and her eyes had an indescribable expression which hurt Anne in a way.

"Dear Anne," she said, her real love for her sister breaking through every other feeling for the moment, "how lucky to have caught me!—another second and I should have been gone! Have you only just arrived? and where is dear Bunny? I went to your hotel this morning, and made floral preparations in your honour. I suppose you have not had my note asking you both to dine here to-night?"

Rachel put her arms about Anne's pretty figure, and kissed her tenderly.

Anne returned the embrace more warmly than was her wont.

"Yes, I have had your note, and we will dine with pleasure; but I did not want to wait until this evening. I wanted to have a chat with you now. Would it be impossible to postpone your drive?"

"Nothing is impossible with me," Rachel answered in her characteristic fashion. "Just excuse me one moment, Anne, while I go and explain the situation. One can have a drive any day; but one only has a visit from one's sister once in a blue moon—or is it a green cheese—I don't remember. Come and speak to Captain Hamilton yourself; you know him, don't you? It will look more pretty if you—"

But Anne was not inclined to be pretty to Captain Hamilton.

"I will wait for you upstairs," she said in her coolest fashion, and she turned and mounted the stairs as she spoke.

Rachel gave her a glance, and her lips took a firm curve. She went out and stood on the steps.

"I am not coming," she announced unconcernedly; "very sorry, but you see my sister is here, and I want to talk to her."

Giles Hamilton swore sharply to himself, then he flung the reins to the groom, and got out of the phaeton.

"Must you talk now?" he asked, putting all the tenderness of which he was capable into his voice; "think of my disappointment of—"

"Oh! disappointment is good for all of us sometimes," Rachel answered him. She had taken off her gloves, and now she offered him her hand. "Good-bye; so many thanks for coming to take me out; you really are too kind; and I am really very sorry to have to disappoint you."

She smiled at him brilliantly, and then turned away and re-entered the house.

The man watching her go felt as if he could have killed Anne Huntley in this moment without the least compunction.

What did she mean by coming to town at this moment! Just in the very moment when, amazing as it seemed, everything tended to show him that his luck was indeed about to turn.

He had been almost bewildered by the events of the last week. Things seemed to have been worked for him as by some magician. Eleanor's disappearance, Lithgow's absence had together been tremendous points in his favour, but they were as nothing compared to the way in which Rachel had seemed to seek his society.

Each day during the past week he had seen her; they had walked together, ridden together, driven together, and yet, good as all this was, Hamilton could only read it as a fine beginning, not a fact accomplished.



RACHEL STOOD WITH HER HANDS CLENCHED AGAINST HER BREAST.

Rachel had been everything that was most charming; she had talked to him unceasingly, had seemed to delight in his presence, and yet Giles would have exchanged all this willingly for one of those moments of simulated calmness when he had seen Rachel's heart beat through her cold greeting, and he knew that she remembered and thrilled at her remembrance.

In this week that had gone there had been no such moment. Not once had he been able to tell himself he had moved the girl the eighth of an inch. She was mistress of herself the whole time, and never more so than now when she dismissed him as coolly as she would a servant.

To his supreme vanity such a dismissal was more than he could endure quietly. The thought rushed upon him as he got into the phaeton again whether Rachel was not intending to pay him in his own coin, mete his punishment out as he had punished her, give him all the hope in the world, and then laugh at him in the face.

"By Heaven!" he swore to himself, "but you shall never do this, Rachel, my girl. You have a desperate man to deal with now—and desperate men do not permit themselves to be played with with impunity!"

Rachel went upstairs to her boudoir humming an air.

"Behold me a pattern sister," she cried as she entered the pretty room, and flung herself down on a chair. "Now then, Anne, peg away; what is it you want to talk about? Ring that bell like an angel, we will have some tea!"

She took her dainty little bonnet from her head as she spoke, and flung it on to a neighbouring chair.

"Anne, you are shocked with me," she observed. "I see horror peeping out all over you."

Anne put down the book she had been reading.

"How long has it been customary in London for a young woman and a young man to go out driving together?" she asked coldly.

Rachel would have been astonished if she could have known how much it cost Anne to speak so

coldly. She drew herself up into a heap in her chair.

"How long!" she repeated lazily, "really I am not quite sure, but somewhere about the date of Noah's Ark. Yes, I believe it was when Noah's Ark found a resting-place that people began driving about together in mail phaetons, they were so glad to get out and drive that they did not wait for chaperones."

Anne rose and walked about the room; she looked at all the photographs scattered about, and Rachel watched her not untingedly.

"Say all you want to say, Anne," she suddenly observed. "You don't know how you frighten me when you are silent!"

Anne turned; there was a suspicious quiver in her voice as she spoke.

"Rachel—promise me you will not judge me harshly or frivolously—I am in earnest. I am your sister—I love you—and—"

Rachel rose too, and stood by the fireplace.

"After all you need not go on, Anne," she said quietly. "I know all you want to say. I am perfectly aware that under ordinary circumstances to do what I am doing now would be nothing short of a scandal, but the circumstances are not quite ordinary. I am, incredible as it may seem, about to enter into another marriage, and I have chosen Captain Hamilton as my second husband!"

Anne stood looking at her almost sternly.

"Rachel, are you in earnest—is this true—has this man dared to ask you to be his wife? Are you really engaged to him?"

Rachel put her hands behind her back, and swayed to and fro as she stood with one foot on the fender.

"I am in earnest; it is quite true; only Captain Hamilton has not, as you put it, dared as yet to speak. He is only waiting his opportunity, and then it will be a *fait accompli*."

Anne came forward hurriedly.

"Oh! Rachel, I beseech you!" she began, and then she paused. "Are you, then, so much in love with vice, with selfishness, with all that is

base and cruel and poorest in a man's nature? Rachel, cease being a child for once. Remember James Castletown, remember the horrors of your marriage, and then remember this, that bad, and coarse, and terrible as Jim was, this man can be infinitely worse. I do not speak without knowing what I say. My life at Silchester has brought me many and many a proof of the sort of man this Giles Hamilton is! You cannot be serious. Look me in the eyes and confess you are doing this from some foolish silly cause, and confess this too," Anne cried, losing for once all her restraint, her coldness, her seeming indifference, and speaking, looking, thrilling with all the passion Rachel could claim, "confess this, too," she cried, putting her hand on the young arm beside her, "that the woman who can turn from such a wealth of exquisite love as given to her by such a man as Bastian Lithgow, and choose instead the passing admiration of such a creature as this Hamilton, is worthy to have all the grief and sorrow Fate can mete out to her."

Rachel was looking full into her sister's eyes; she was trembling in every limb; she was as white as death.

"What are you saying, Anne?" she asked, hoarsely, "what mare's nest have you got into your head? Bastian love me! Bastian—you are mad!"

"Bastian has loved you all his life—since you were a child till now he has loved you. He will never love any other woman but you, and I would never have spoken as I am doing now, but that I cannot, I will not stand by a second time and see you go to destruction, to misery greater than death!"

Rachel was standing with her hands clenched against her breast.

"You are wrong, Anne. Wrong—wrong—all wrong," she said, still hoarsely; a wild fever was running in her blood, beating about her heart and brain. "Bastian does not love me—he loves another woman, and she is with him now—she has been with him all this last week!"

(To be continued.)





VERA HURRIED HER FOOTSTEPS, MADDOX FOLLOWING BEHIND CARRYING THE LITTLE BLACK BAG.

## THE GREYSTOKE MYSTERY.

—205—

## CHAPTER XIX.

## FAREWELL TO THE GRANGE.

VERA started up in a listening attitude, bending a little forward and trying to recognise the voice that spoke. The tapping was repeated—more impatiently this time.

"Let me in, Vera. I have something of importance to say to you."

Her first impression had been that it was her father who called, but the voice was fuller and deeper than his, and she rightly guessed it belonged to Dudley Maddox.

Without further ado she opened the window, and the young man stepped inside. He wore a mackintosh, which was still dripping with rain, his hat was pulled down over his ears, his boots were muddy, as though he had walked a long distance. On entering he cast a swift glance round the study.

"You are alone?"

"Yes. Quite alone. Even the servants have left the house."

Although he raised his eyebrows in apparent surprise he seemed to breathe more freely, and proceeded to divest himself of his wet wrappings, which he threw in a heap on the floor.

"I have just come over from R—," he said; as she knew, he had a couple of rooms at R—.

"The news that a warrant was out for your father's arrest had been telegraphed there, and there was a rumour that he had been apprehended. Is this true?"

"I do not know. It may be so."

He seated himself at the writing-table, and looked at her gravely, his own face showing signs of nervousness. After a minute, he added,—

"You must tell me what has happened here since I left yesterday morning. Remember I know nothing definite, nothing beyond the vague rumours I have mentioned. I thought Mr.

Graham and my cousin both went to London yesterday."

"So they did, but he returned this evening."

"Well?"

"Well, a detective came for the purpose of arresting him. But I dare say," she added, with scornful suspicion, "you know a great deal more of the matter than I can tell you."

"Indeed," he returned, earnestly, "you are mistaken. I was not on terms of confidence with your father; more than that, I was often afraid he did not like me, and resented my visits to the Grange."

"Why did you come, then?"

"Because Adela was my only relative, except an old aunt, and I was fond of her, I suppose. You see we had been brought up together, and I looked upon her as a sister. Besides, her life here was very dull, and she used to tell me I made it somewhat brighter for her."

He spoke with a quiet sincerity, that convinced Vera almost against her will. His face betokened entire single-mindedness.

If he were an actor then he was the most consummate one it is possible to imagine. His eyes looked straight into hers; there was not a shadow of embarrassment in them.

Vera became ashamed of her suspicions, and went on to narrate to him the events of the evening, he listening without further comment than an exclamation of horror when she told him of her father's confession, which seemed wrong from him in spite of himself.

When she finished he took out a handkerchief and wiped his brow and lips.

"Poor girl, what an awful experience for you!"

he muttered. "I had no idea matters were as bad as this, though I have known for a long time they were not as they should be here. You need not look at me like that, Vera, I have had no share in them, and this evening when I heard the news I did not know what to believe. So I hired a carriage and drove to within a quarter of a mile of the lodge, and then walked on up here expecting to find my cousin."

"How was it you called me, then?"

"Because I saw a line of light between the curtains, and so knew the room was tenanted, and when I approached near enough, I could see you through a hole in them. You do not know where your step-mother is, then?"

She shook her head, and relapsed into listless silence. He, meanwhile, leaned his cheek on his hand, and seemed lost in thought. Presently he looked up, and spoke with an air almost amounting to command.

"You must leave the house at once, Vera; it is liable to be searched by the police at any moment, and is certainly no place for you. You ought not to lose an instant in getting away."

"That is all very well, but where am I to go?"

"I have thought of that. I will take you to the house of my aunt, who lives in Wales. She is blind, and a widow, not rich, but fairly well off, and she will give you a home until you have time to look about you, and decide on your future plan of action. It will not be a luxurious home, but it will be a peaceful one, and that is something. Besides, it will be advisable for you to remain in retirement for some little time until we see how matters turn out. I have seen more of the world than you, and although I cannot claim blood relationship, we are, in a manner of speaking, connected, and I consider it my duty as well as a privilege to look after you as I should do if you were my own sister."

Naturally Vera's nature was trustful enough, but latterly so much deception had been practised on her that she had grown suspicious.

Her first impulse was one of gratitude towards Maddox, her second doubts as to the genuineness of his friendship.

Perhaps from her silence he guessed something of what was passing in her mind, for the colour mounted to his dark cheek, and he bit his lip.

"You must forget those mad words of love I once spoke to you," he added. "You gave me your answer, and I accepted it. Believe me, my present offer has its origin in friendship only. If

I saw anything better for you to do I would suggest it; but really there is nothing."

She saw this herself.

The more generous side of her character rebuked her for doubting the young man, even while she could not get rid of a latent fear.

"Where do you say your aunt lives?" she asked, temporising.

"Near Dolgelly, in North Wales."

"How can you answer for her receiving me?"

"Oh, you need not doubt that. She has been wanting a companion for a long time who would read to her and write her letters; but she could not afford to pay one. She will be only too delighted to have you. I shall come with you as far as the end of the journey, and see you safely settled; after that I must return to England. The only difficulty is that you will not be able to take much luggage with you, as we shall have to walk from here to W—— station, and catch the six o'clock mail; but that is a minor consideration. I daresay I can contrive to get the rest of your things forwarded to you later on."

Vera was in a dilemma.

On the one hand she was painfully anxious to leave the Grange and its wretched associations—on the other she could not rid herself of a lingering fear that Maddox, for all his apparent friendship, might be laying a trap for her.

Her position was one of great difficulty; she had no one to appeal to for advice—everything depended on her own judgment.

Whether her father had made good his escape or not she was unable to tell; but in either case she dreaded seeing him.

It was impossible, after his conduct, that she could feel any filial affection or duty towards him—indeed, the very thought of him made her shudder.

While she hesitated Dudley Maddox bent forward and took her hand, his brown eyes fixing themselves with piercing intentness on hers.

"You will trust me, Vera," he said softly, his fingers tightening their grasp, and sending a curious magnetic sort of thrill through her veins. "You will come with me, and believe that my whole thought is for your welfare."

The girl was conscious of some kind of compelling force, which seemed outside her own will, as to speak, and to which she felt bound to yield.

"I will trust you," she said after a pause, and not till then did Maddox remove his clasp.

"You do me no more than justice," he replied, and there was a certain dignity in his voice and manner. "Now let me get you some wine and a biscuit. It may be some time before you have another chance of any food, and it is as well to take advantage of the opportunity."

It was quite a new sensation for Vera to be waited on, and made the object of care and attention, and she was woman enough to be grateful for it.

There was nothing in Dudley's manner of which she could complain—on the contrary, he treated her with the chivalrous respect of a subject for his queen, even while his movements were full of a brisk and business-like alertness that showed he knew the value of every moment.

Afterwards, when Vera looked back on the events of that night, they were invested with a dream-like air of unreality.

She remembered slipping out of the Grange through the study window, and turning back to cast one more glance at the gloomy old house, which looked gruesome enough in the faint grey dawn, only just breaking.

All the blinds were down; some of the shutters were closed; the most looked darker and slier than ever, and Vera turned away with a shudder as she thought of its hidden terrors.

There were no loving memories entwined with the house that was the only home she had known; on the contrary, her one feeling was that of intense relief at the idea of shaking its dust off her feet for ever. She hurried through the plantation, looking neither to right nor left.

A few birds were just waking up and twittering sleepily from the warmth of their nests, a stealthy rustle amongst the leaves betrayed the presence of some nocturnal animal stealing back to its lair; raindrops hung on every blade of grass, and fell in a shower from the branches of the trees as the wind shook them; the chill of damp and early morning was in the air.

Vera drew her long black cloak closer round her, and hurried her footsteps, Maddox following behind, and carrying the little black bag she had packed in readiness for her journey to London with her father.

They were not going to Greystone Station, but to that of the county town, which was some four or five miles distant, and where they would be less likely to be noticed.

The young girl had tied a thick veil over her face to conceal it; so overcame, with shame was she at the fear of being recognised as her father's daughter that she bent her head low on her breast, and kept her eyes fixed on the ground in a fashion very foreign to her usual stately demeanour.

Dudley, on the contrary, was cool and self-possessed, and made all the arrangements for the journey with perfect *sovereign* ease, and soon Vera found herself seated in a corner of a first-class carriage, and opposite to him, whirling along through the misty greyness of the country at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

"Now the best thing you can do is to go to sleep," said the young man, with a smile, "and not wake up until you reach your destination."

She closed her eyes obediently; but sleep was out of the question. The strangeness of her present position was, in itself, sufficient to excite her, travelling to an unknown land, to make a home with unknown people.

She could not help thinking of her last railway journey, of the hopes with which she had set out, the loving anticipations of meeting her father that filled her heart. How terribly those anticipations had been fulfilled!

## CHAPTER XX.

### A NEW HOME.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Dudley Maddox, as the train drew up at a small, flower-decked station, in the shadow of the Welsh hills. "Now the next question is, how are we to get to Glen Raron? Of course cabs are out of the question, and I am afraid the walk will be too far for you. It is at least three miles."

They had changed trains two or three times, and the last part of the journey had been extremely slow and tedious, though the loveliness of the scenery through which they passed went far towards compensating for it.

It was now six o'clock, and the evening shadows were lengthening, the great hills were tinged with purple, the sun was slanting westward, the birds were beginning to sing their vesper hymns. Over all the land lay the golden peace of an exquisite summer evening.

The little station, with its sweet smelling magnonette and clustered roses, struck Vera with a vague sense of pleasure; it looked so clean and fresh and wholesome that it almost seemed like a promise of a better future.

This impression strengthened when, after a drive in a ramshackle old trap that they had had the good fortune to find waiting outside, they drew up in front of Glen Raron itself.

It was not very much more than a glorified cottage, being long and low, with whitewashed walls, black beams, lattice windows, and roof of thatch; but it was half smothered in red roses and honeysuckle, the rustic porch was draped with the yellow festoons of clematis; the little lawn in front was smooth as velvet, and the prettily designed beds were full of different sweet-smelling flowers; altogether it had a wonderfully cosy and homelike look, and this was increased by the figure standing within the porch to welcome them, a small, slight, fragile-looking woman of more than middle age, with snow white hair, waving on either side of her

delicate face, and tucked away under a white net cap at the back.

Her dress was of black silk; her hands were mitted, and glittering with rings; she wore too, a tiny black silk apron trimmed with white lace, which added an indescribably dainty air to her appearance. But the soft blue eyes, whose colour was not unlike that of a forget-me-not, were sightless.

"Here we are, Aunt Lina," exclaimed Dudley, with an air of almost boyish gaiety. "We have had a long and dusty journey, and we are as hungry as the proverbial hunter. I have brought Miss Graham with me. I'm sure you two will be good friends."

"Anyone who is a friend of yours must be a friend of mine, dear boy," returned the old lady, who had kissed him affectionately, and now turned towards the direction where she supposed Vera to be, and held out her hand. "I expect you are both tired. Come in, come in, and as soon as you have had a wash we'll have tea."

Vera followed her indoors, feeling more reassured and at ease than she had been since she left Greystone.

The contrast between the sombre tragedy of the Grange and this bright cottage was a welcome surprise to her, and when she reached her own room, and noticed the freshness of its chintz-covered chairs, the purity of the bed and toilet draperies, the trellis work of roses that climbed over the paper on the walls, and the bouquet of flowers placed in a conspicuous position on the table, she began to feel really grateful to Maddox for his efforts on her behalf.

Moreover, the old blind lady interested her, while the kindness of her greeting awoke a warm and generous response in her heart. She hastened to bathe her face and smooth her ruffled hair, donned a clean collar and cuffs, and then descended to the sitting-room; where, on a snowy cloth, a substantial tea was already laid. It was by no means a luxurious meal, but the viands were all excellent of their kind—home-made bread, golden butter, pink and white ham, and brown-shelled eggs, flanked by honey-comb and stewed fruit.

Mrs. Lewis was already seated in front of the tray, ready to dispense tea and coffee, and Vera could only wonder at the extraordinary delicacy of the blind woman's touch, as she put the sugar and milk in the cups with unerring accuracy, and then handed them to her visitors. She was lively, too, in her gentle way, and full of inquiries as to the events of the journey.

"I am afraid we have not much to tell you about the journey, Aunt Lina," laughed Dudley, who seemed in excellent spirits, and was in process of making a very good meal. "We were both tired, and slept as much as we possibly could, although Vera, under other and less fatiguing circumstances, would, I am sure, have admired your lovely Welsh scenery."

"It is a pity," murmured the old lady, folding her white hands one over the other and turning her sightless eyes in Vera's direction. "We are very proud of our country—it is not really mine by birth, for I am English, but my husband was Welsh, and very patriotic into the bargain."

"And you, like a good wife, followed his example!"

"Yes," with a smile, followed by a sigh, "I knew it pleased him that I should make myself as Welsh as possible, and as all I lived for was to please him—why, of course, I tried my best."

"There Vera!" said Dudley, smiling, "Does not that convey to you a charming picture of matrimonial felicity?"

"It does, indeed," returned the old lady.

"My aunt and uncle were a model couple. I spent a good deal of my boyhood here, and I never heard a cross word pass between them."

"My dear Dudley! I should think not," exclaimed the old lady in quite a flutter of indignation. "I hope I know my place better than to contradict my husband. My dear," she said, addressing Vera, "I trust you are not one of the new-fangled women, who cut their hair short, wear men's collars, and neckties, and presume to put themselves above their husbands and fathers."

The young girl laughed at this definition of the "new woman," and



"I certainly don't wear my hair short, and I don't think my collar is masculine—though on that point I really can't say. But I am afraid I should not scruple to contradict my husband or father if I thought them wrong."

"But they know so much better than you!"

"Do they? The rule is not an invariable one, and from my point of view women are quite as capable of coming to a right conclusion as men."

"Dear me, dear me!" sighed Mrs. Lewis, with an agitated movement of her mitted hands, "I am sorry to hear you put forth such views—and yet Dudley tells me you are quite young."

"I am nearly twenty."

"That is very young."

"Do you think so? I suppose it is in actual years; but if a woman has anything in her she is quite able to have opinions of her own at that age, and what is more, to carry them out. Indeed, even at the risk of shocking you I must say that I think the world would get on very much better if women were taught to depend more on themselves and their own judgment."

Dudley laughed long and loudly.

"You see I have introduced a Philistine into the camp, Aunt Lina. But you must talk her over to your views. I'm afraid, however, she'll be rather difficult to convert."

The old lady shook her head sadly enough. She was very much in earnest in her ideas, and was actually horrified at hearing them disputed. Accustomed all her married life to yielding implicit obedience to an exacting husband she had grown to look upon such a state of things as not only righteous but perfectly natural.

"Women is the weaker vessel, you will not deny that?" she said, severely.

"I think I must take upon myself to deny it, Aunt Lina," put in Dudley, who wished to end the discussion. "And now let us talk of something else—your flowers, for instance."

Mrs. Lewis' face lighted up at once.

"Ah, yes, are they not lovely, Miss Graham? I plant and tend them all myself, and spend half the day over them. First thing in the morning, and last thing at night I go out to see them."

Vera was surprised to hear her talk of "seeing" when she was absolutely sightless. If she had been more used to blind persons she would have known that they often made use of this expression.

She followed her hostess into the garden and was amazed at her quickness in moving about; and of her accurate knowledge of every plant—sometimes of every flower that bloomed in the beds.

It was still quite light, though the evening was advancing, and Vera had an opportunity of studying the position of the cottage, which, for all its brightness, was undoubtedly lonely.

It was perched half way up a hill; around it spread rough sheep pasture, interspersed with clumps of gorse and bramble.

Not another house was visible, although down in the valley could be seen the smoke of passing trains, and an indication of the whereabouts of the station.

"You do not seem to have many neighbours," she observed to the blind woman.

"I have none. The nearest house is two miles away, and that is a tobacco farm."

"Aren't you lonely sometimes?"

"Very rarely. You see, I have my garden in summer, and in the winter I look after my birds. You have not seen them yet. I have a parrot, and quite a large family of canaries and finches; which I keep in a room upstairs. They are very tame, and most of them will perch on my arm or shoulder when I go near them. They are my winter flowers."

She smiled as she spoke; there was certainly no sign that she repined at her misfortune.

Perhaps this was partly because her outlook had always been a narrow one, bounded by her own small interests and occupations.

She had been brought from a little country village when she was married, and had lived in the same cottage ever since.

The principal events of her life had been the death of her husband, and her own suffering from the cataracts that had resulted in her blindness.

The one person who had most influence over her, the one whom she most admired, was her nephew, Dudley Maddox, and it must be confessed he had shown her very considerable kindness, not only in sending her money, which gave her comforts that she could not otherwise have had, but in coming to see her occasionally, and in many little acts of thoughtful consideration which she fully appreciated.

Indeed, it must be admitted that Maddox was by nature kindly enough, although he hesitated at nothing when it was a question of his own will or pleasure.

At his suggestion, Vera retired early, since he rightly judged she must be fatigued both bodily and mentally, by the strain of the last day or two.

She was glad to find herself alone, but instead of going to bed, she seated herself near the window, and gave herself up to thought.

Her journey had been so hurried that she had really had no time to think seriously over her situation; now, however, the full realization of its loneliness came upon her, coupled with an uneasy consciousness that she had put herself under an obligation to the one man, out of all the world, she had wished to be free from.

Well, it could not be helped. She had accepted the only alternative left her, and having done so, she must make the best of her position.

She hoped, however, she would not have to remain in it long; as soon as possible she must look out for some situation by which she could earn her living.

Then—in spite of all her endeavours—her thoughts wandered to Maurice.

She closed her eyes, and brought his mental image before her; she recalled his tender glances, his repeated vows of love, the happy time they had spent together at Evermond Court, their dreams of the future.

Alas! alas! The future stretched before them both dim, and gray, and hopeless; and Vera pressed her fingers against her eyes to keep back the tears that forced their way through.

Then she got up and told herself she must never again indulge in such weakness. She must live her life as became a brave woman, sad though it might be, and let the dead past bury its dead.

As she stood facing the window, the blind of which was up, she could see a man standing in the garden below, gazing intently up, and she recognized him at once as Dudley Maddox.

She shivered, involuntarily, and tried to turn away. To her amazement she found her limbs refused to obey her will, she still stood as if rooted to the spot by some power outside herself.

How long she remained thus she could hardly have told. A cold spell seemed laid upon her, which rendered either thought or action impossible. At last Maddox slowly walked away, and then Vera drew a long deep breath, the tension on mind and will relaxed, and she gazed round bewilderedly, like one who has just awoken from a wretched dream.

When she thought over the strange occurrence she was almost frightened by the impression it left on her. What was the meaning of this uncanny power which Maddox appeared to be able to exercise over her? She remembered how she had hesitated about consenting to come with him to Wales, and while she hesitated he had taken her hands, and looked fixedly into her eyes, with the result that her opposition had melted away as snow melts in the sunshine.

Vera could not understand it at all. She tried to put the remembrance from her, and she crept into bed and, after some time, went to sleep with the name of "Maurice" on her lips.

## CHAPTER XXI.

A STARTLING CHURCH SERVICE.

Life at Glen Raveon was very quiet, but it was not dull. Contrary to his avowed intention Dudley stayed on at the cottage, and indeed showed no signs of intending to depart. He hired a pony and carriage from the village, and spent most of his time in driving the two ladies

round the country, or in accompanying Vera in her long walks.

She was out of doors from morning till night, for she found that the best means of preventing her mind from dwelling on her father's crime. The horror with which she regarded it seemed to increase rather than lessen—it haunted her like a nightmare, and the only way to get rid of it seemed to be in setting out for a long tramp over the moorland, and coming home thoroughly tired out and ready for bed.

The days lengthened into a week, that into a fortnight. Neither her hostess nor Maddox would hear of her going away, and she finally ceased suggesting it, for she somehow felt herself at this special time quite unable to cope with any determined opposition. This was so different to the usual resoluteness of her nature that she was puzzled to account for it, except on the ground of not feeling well.

Perhaps it was hardly surprising that her health should have suffered from the shock of the events that preceded her departure from Grey-stoke. She grew perceptibly thinner, her appetite failed, she had to curtail her walks because they proved too fatiguing, and worst of all, she could not sleep at night. She would toss and turn about on her pillow, seeing visions of the Grange, of her father, of poor Frank St. John lying dead on the floor of the railway compartment, and sometimes she would even start up in bed, wringing her hands and crying aloud at the reality of the vision her imagination conjured before her.

During all this time she had not heard a word of the outside world. Once or twice she requested Dudley to get her a newspaper, but he declined, saying it was better she should not see one, and in face of his refusal she could do nothing.

Unhappily, the very day after she came to the cottage she had lost her purse, and with it the sum of money Mrs. Graham had given her when she left the Grange to take her husband to London. As this represented the whole of her fortune, it followed that she was absolutely penniless—a state of affairs that made her feel exceedingly helpless. How she came to lose the purse was a mystery she could not fathom; but that did not affect the fact itself. Another thing puzzled her—she had written twice to her old schoolfellow, Mabel Butler, but to neither letter had she received a reply, she could only suppose that Mabel had either forgotten her or did not care to keep up her friendship with one upon whose name such disgrace had fallen—for, of course, Vera was aware the story of her father's crime would be in every newspaper, and would provide a nine days' wonder for all England.

One evening she was sitting outside in the rustic porch with Mrs. Lewis, watching the sun set, whose gorgeous colours she was describing to the blind woman, when the latter suddenly leaned forward, and took her hand.

"My dear," she said, "Dudley has been talking to me about you to-day, and telling me your history. It is a sad one; but you are young, and in time you will forget the sadness, or at least learn to think of it in the light of a chastened memory. Even such dark clouds as these have their silver linings."

"I fail to see the lining," the young girl answered, bitterly enough.

"That is because you are wilful and perverse, and blind to your own good. This trial of yours has shown you the worth of a good man's love."

"What do you mean?" Vera asked, startled.

"I mean that my nephew Dudley has told me how dearly he loves you, and how he wishes to make you his wife. Ought not any girl to be thankful for such constancy?"

"I thought, I hoped he had forgotten all that," murmured the girl, in a troubled voice.

"He will never forget it," Mrs. Lewis put in, quickly; "I know his nature better than anyone else, and I can see that his love for you has become so much a part of his life that even he himself is powerless to uproot it. Is it possible that you can be so ungrateful as to persist in your refusal to marry him?"

"I shall never marry," Vera declared, firmly, and drawing her hand away as she spoke, "I have thoroughly made up my mind on that point."

"You say that now, as many girls have said it before, but it means nothing. If you take my advice, you will tell Dudley that you have altered your mind."

"Even when I do not love him?"

But this was an aspect of the case Mrs. Lewis refused to contemplate. How any woman could help loving her favourite Dudley was more than she could understand, and Vera saw that, good and kind as the old lady was, she might prove hard enough when it came to a question of his happiness.

She rose with a little sigh, and went indoors somewhat disturbed by this conversation, which told her that Maddox had not really given up his suit, in spite of what he had said the night before their journey.

She told herself she must leave Glen Raston as soon as possible; yes, even if she had to beg her way to the nearest town. More than that, she must make an immense effort to overcome the moral weakness which seemed to have taken such a strange hold over her, and which was always more patent when she was in the presence of Dudley Maddox.

He was out this afternoon, having driven to the post town on business, whose nature he did not think fit to mention. Tokens of his presence were everywhere visible in the little sitting-room. There was his box of cigars over on a side table, his Turkish fez which he used as a smoking-cap, his meerschaum pipe, and the book he had been reading. The latter attracted Vera's attention, and she got up to look at its contents.

The title of the work was "Hypnotism," and it treated of the influence one person was able to attain over the will of another, and the consequent subjection of that other's will.

Vera turned over page after page, devouring the text with avidity. At last she came to the end of the chapter, and then let the volume fall on her lap, while she worked out a train of thought it suggested.

Evidently Maddox had made a study of the subject, for certain passages were marked, and the pencillings were quite fresh, while he had added certain remarks of his own that showed considerable shrewdness as well as personal observation.

Vera remembered that her weakness of will and irresolution had been more marked in his presence than when she was away from him, and there grew up in her mind a certainty that he was really the cause of it.

By some means he had established over her an hypnotic influence, which strengthened day by day, and which would surely end in a subjugation of her will to his.

The young girl started from her chair in alarm. Now that the clue was given her she was able to work out the whole matter with perfect clearness, and to understand the powers of persuasion by which he had induced her to come to Wales, and to remain at Glen Raston cottage.

"I want you to write some letters for me, my dear," said Mrs. Lewis, entering from the garden. "Only some orders for provisions and flower seeds; but you must read out the prices in the list, and I will tell you which to 'select.'"

It was so seldom the blind lady asked her to do anything for her that Vera could hardly refuse; so, although her brain was still in a whirl, she controlled herself sufficiently to write out the orders, and before she had finished Maddox himself entered.

He saw at once by her flushed face that something had happened during his absence, and when his eye fell on the book, which lay close beside her on the table, he probably guessed what it was. A dark frown crossed his brow, but it cleared almost immediately, and he laughed slightly as he slipped the volume in his pocket.

"I hope you have not been reading this ridiculous book," he observed. "It is rubbish from beginning to end."

"Why do you study it, then?"

"I don't study it. I have glanced through it casually, when I had nothing better to do—that's all."

With consummate tact he changed the subject; but he was clearly uneasy, and mentally cursed himself for having left the work lying about for

her to see. She felt his glance on her during the rest of the evening, but she dared not look up to meet it, and some time before her usual hour for retiring she said "Good-night," and went to bed.

The next day was Sunday, and as it happened Maddox was suffering from one of the violent headaches to which he was occasionally subject, and which rendered him incapable of leaving his bed. When the news of his indisposition was given to Vera by Mrs. Lewis it is to be feared she was heartlessly pleased, since it gave her the whole day in which to think over her plans without the disturbance of his presence.

Directly after breakfast she left the cottage to go for a long walk over the hills. Mrs. Lewis gave her strict injunctions to return in time for the early two o'clock dinner of the establishment, and this she promised to do, since it was useless to try to get away on a Sabbath.

It was a very hot morning; the sun shone in all his midsummer strength out of a cloudless sky; bees were buzzing in and out of the gorse blossoms with a heavy booming sound of supreme content; the grass looked dry and arid already; even the hardy little mountain sheep seemed to feel the heat. From far off came the sound of church bells borne across the gorse-scented air.

Vera followed the sound, determining to attend the morning service. She had not been to church ever since she left school, and a delicious feeling of peaceful serenity stole over her as she entered the cool little grey stone edifice, with its high backed pews, its stone tablets on the walls, recording the virtues of dead and gone worthies, and its one stained glass window over the communion table, through which the sunlight fell, broken in coloured gleams on the stones below.

The bells ceased, a little "ting-tang," began, and then the congregation filed in—a very sparse congregation by the way, consisting for the most part of farmers and their labourers, all of whom stared with undigested curiosity at the beautiful young stranger who sat all alone in her pew.

The officiating clergyman was a very young man, who had evidently not long been ordained, and who seemed the victim of nervousness and weak eyes. Once or twice he lost his place, his gaze having wandered to the new member of his congregation, and then he grew red all over his fair somewhat foolish face, and stammered and floundered about in a way that hugely delighted the school children. And yet in spite of his incapacity, Vera thoroughly enjoyed the simple service. Her own sorrows and perplexities seemed to slip from her for the moment, leaving her soul open to the sweet words of promise and peace which were read out to her.

Just before the sermon the young parson advanced to the altar rails, and gave out the various parochial notices for the ensuing week. Then followed the publication of the banns of marriage, and to these everyone seemed to listen with absorbed attention—Vera alone excepted. She did not take an especial interest in the approaching nuptials of Evan Thomas with Jane Jones, but at the announcement of the next two names she raised her head quickly, and every drop of blood seemed to leave her cheeks.

"Also between Dudley Maddox, bachelor, of Glen Raston Cottage in this parish, to Veronica Graham, spinster, of the same place. This is for the third time of asking. If any of you know any just cause or impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony ye are to declare it."

(To be continued.)

BURNES AYRES seems to have the largest "rocking stone" yet discovered. It is situated on the slope of the mountain of Tandil, in the southern part of the province, and measures ninety feet long by eighteen feet broad and twenty-four feet high. Its bulk is five thousand cubic feet, and its weight at least twenty-five tons. Nevertheless, it is so touchily poised that a single person can set it rocking.

## BRENDA'S GUARDIAN.

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### CHAPTER XXI.

LADY MARY CAMERON drove home from the Ainslies' garden party with a troubled mind. She could not help feeling that Dr. Thornton was right in saying at any moment Brenda might learn her mother's story; in spite of the prejudice the widow had once felt against her son's ward for her mother's wrong, she had learned to love the girl very dearly, and she did not like to think of her being unhappy.

Brenda seemed almost the more cheerful of the two at their little *tête-à-tête* dinner; it was only when the servants had left the room that Lady Mary mentioned the garden party.

"I am very glad you did not go; Mrs. Ainslie is a horrid woman."

"Which means she is offended with me," said Brenda, quickly. "Never mind, her son will find someone much richer than I am; and then she will forgive me, meanwhile I don't think her displeasure will break my heart."

"You must avoid her as much as possible," said Lady Mary quietly.

"But why?" demanded the colonial heiress. "I haven't done her any harm, I have nothing to be ashamed of."

Lady Mary sighed; there were times when she wished her son's ward had not been so painfully free from knowledge of the world.

"Mrs. Ainslie is a dangerous woman," she said gravely. "I can't explain fully, but I ask you as a favour to avoid her."

"Of course I will if you wish it," answered Brenda warmly. "Dear Lady Mary, I am an awful nuisance to you; wouldn't you like me to go away?"

"I think when Guy comes home we might all go away," said the widow, kindly. "It is not the season for the sea-side, but we could find some pleasant little place on the coast where we would not be dull; I think Bournemouth would suit us; there are so many sea trips from there and you are so fond of the sea."

Bournemouth was in Hampshire; it might not be very near Penfold Manor, but Brenda had no wish to find herself even in the same county as John Trelawny.

"I would rather go to Folkestone," she said, cheerfully; "it would be so nice to be able to go over to France for the day."

"Well, Folkestone is it then," returned Lady Mary. "I wish Guy would make haste home."

But the days passed and he did not return; a cautious man, he hardly cared to write the terrible suspicions that were afloat respecting Marmaduke Tremaine's fate, and the cause of his sudden trip to France.

He sent one or two brief notes telling his mother it was impossible to fix the exact date of his return; she must write to Sir Marmaduke's rooms in Dolphin-street, and he would be home again as soon as possible.

And just when this news came, Brenda Hazelmer's spirits began to flag; she was not ill, she made no complaint, but the spring died out of her step, and the smiles left her face.

Brenda suddenly found herself face to face with a terrible trouble; what she had dreaded ever since her arrival in England had actually come to pass, and, poor girl, she knew not what to do or whose help to seek.

The second day after Alice Browne's departure, when Brenda went upstairs to dress for dinner, she found on her looking glass a note addressed in a hand-writing which sent every drop of blood from her cheeks and filled her with a heart-sickening pain.

It was more than three months since she had parted from John Trelawny on board the steamer she had begun to hope he had foregone his threats and meant to leave her in peace, but now she saw her own name in his hand-writing, and learned at one stroke two things—he knew the name she now bore, and he had not renounced his claim on her:—



"MY DEAR LITTLE GIRL,—

"If you forget your promises, I have no difficulty in remembering mine. You swore once that you loved me and would be my wife; I intend you to keep the latter pledge, I told you I would never give you up, and I mean to keep my word. I hear your guardian, Sir Guy Cameron is a gentleman of the old school, with very stern notions of truth and honour, so he will hardly uphold his ward in breaking her solemn word. As the owner of Penfold Manor I cannot be accused of mercenary motives in seeking to marry you, and I will marry you, cost what it may. You had better not drive me to desperation, Brenda, you have to deal with a man whose will has never yet been conquered; you had better have me for an adoring husband than a stern gaoler, and I swear to you it shall be one or the other. Think over this letter carefully, you shall soon hear more from your constant lover,

"JOHN TRELAWNY."

Brenda Hazelmere sat as one turned to stone. How she feared and loathed this man no tongue could tell; but she had not a friend in the world to whom she could turn for help and guidance. How could she confide her miserable story to any one, when to do so she must confess she had basely deceived her father, and at the very moment of his death had been holding a clandestine meeting with her lover! Besides, Brenda knew the story looked black against herself. If she had loved Trelawny once, people would argue, why did she shrink from him in loathing now! She could not explain that her girlish fancy had been ensnared by his handsome face and rich musical voice, but that a closer acquaintance with him had filled her with fear and repulsion.

Lady Mary would have condemned her utterly—or Brenda thought so. Sir Guy was away. Besides, she would have died of very shame had she tried to tell her guardian that dark and story.

Mrs. Lennox had wounded the girl to the quick by what Brenda thought her desertion. Besides, Goody was not a strong character. She would have been well-nigh as frightened as Brenda herself.

There were two people the poor young heiress might have trusted with her story, but neither was within reach. Brenda had never forgotten the almost fatherly kindness of Sir Marmaduke Tremaine. She felt she could have trusted him and not been misunderstood, just as she could have confided in Alice Browne and been sure the woman who had suffered so terribly herself from marrying a scoundrel would help her young lady to escape a similar fate.

But Sir Marmaduke had disappeared, and Alice was—no one knew where. Brenda had written to Mrs. Lennox begging her to help and befriend the poor woman who was worse than widowed, but the reply had not been encouraging. Susan wrote that she had seen nothing of Alice Browne, and she inclined to think the story was a trumped-up affair, invented because the girl had tired of quiet respectable service, and wanted to get back to her free independent life again. On the whole, Mrs. Lennox continued, she was thankful Alice had departed. A younger servant with no dark pages in her past would be a far more suitable attendant for Brenda, and she had always thought Alice too pretty and mysterious for her post.

"Why is everyone hard on a woman who can't get on with her husband!" thought poor Brenda as she folded up this letter and put it away. "Even Goody, the kindest creature I ever knew, is down on Alice because she is unfortunate enough to have married a scoundrel. It seems to me," thought the heiress sadly, "the world's judgment is always against women—people make excuses for men but never for us. They expect us to be angels, and never pity us for anything we suffer at a man's hands. I am sure that women get the worst of it all through life."

And in a measure Brenda was right. So far as public opinion goes it is always against a woman when she leaves her home, or does not get on with her husband. Society never seems to remember that it can never know, never attempt to gauge all a woman suffers before she takes that last fatal step, and leaves the man she

has sworn to love and honour. Popular opinion always declares there "must be some other man," forgetting that it is possible to run away from positive suffering without any other desire than to escape pain.

There are two sides to every contract, and the husband's part of the deed is not fulfilled by the providing of a home, food, and clothing. If a woman's heart is slowly starving to death for want of love and sympathy, if all the higher qualities of her nature are paralyzed by coldness and indifference, surely she has a right to her freedom. When the man forgets to love and cherish he has no right to expect to be honoured and obeyed.

Poor Brenda! through it all she had one ray of comfort. In those early days at London Tower John Trelawny had pleaded again and again for a stolen marriage; she had very nearly yielded, but something always held her back. How thankful she felt now. She might have to leave her home to escape from this man's persecutions. She might lose every friend she had in the world through his machinations. He might (on this point the girl's mind was not clear) claim her fortune as forfeit; but at least she was not his wife. She had never borne his name or worn his wedding-ring. If only she hid herself from him she would be safe and free.

There was no address to his letter, so Brenda could not have answered it in any case. She felt there was nothing to do but wait for Trelawny's next step. But waiting is weary work. The cruel suspense of those June days faded the colour from her cheeks, and made her look like the poor little ghost of her former self. Lady Mary grew visibly uneasy. She dosed the girl with tonics, and began to talk of starting for Folkestone without waiting for her son's company.

An acquaintance of hers had just returned from Folkestone, and Lady Mary drove over one afternoon to hear her account of the fair Kentish watering-place. Brenda declined to accompany her friend, and Lady Mary established her on the sofa before she left.

The sofa was drawn up near the French windows, which stood open. Brenda had been half-dozing when she awoke with a start and a shudder as of sudden terror. There on the terrace outside, so close that he could have stretched out his hand and touched her—stood John Trelawny.

"Silence!" he said authoritatively, as the girl uttered a short, sharp cry. "Silence for your own sake if not for mine. I must talk to you. Will you join me here or shall I come inside?"

For answer she came through the open French window on to the terrace steps. He would have taken her hand, but she snatched it away. There was a look on her face which would have discouraged any man less bold and reckless.

"You haven't come to your senses yet, then?" he said, sarcastically. "You are not disposed to give me the affectionate greeting which it was my good fortune to receive in Africa?"

"Will you state your business and leave me?" panted Brenda.

"I'm coming to my business. It can be summed up in one word—you!"

"What?"

"I want you. You promised to be my wife. I am here to claim you."

"And if I refuse?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall go straight to Sir Guy Cameron. He will make you see your duty."

"I doubt it."

Trelawny looked at her fixedly.

"Sir Guy will have reasons of his own for sympathizing with me."

"I don't believe it."

"Brenda," said her unwelcome lover, dropping his sarcastic tone, and speaking in one more friendly, "Did you by any chance ever learn your mother's history?"

"She died when I was a little child. I would rather you did not speak of her. You are not worthy to take her name upon your lips."

"I fancy her name was upon a good many people's lips," said Trelawny, with a sneer. "Perhaps you've no idea what a notorious person

she was, and how she set quiet Berkshire people talking. Most of the Camerons' friends were astounded that you should be received into the home whose happiness your parents wrecked.

"I don't believe a word you say."

"Well, every creature in this place will confirm my story. Your mother was engaged to Guy Cameron (he was a mere boy, barely twenty-one), and their wedding-day fixed when she eloped with his own particular friend, Kenneth Norton Hazelmere."

Brenda uttered one bitter cry, but this time she spoke no passionate denial. The words would not come. Something in her heart told her the charge was true. It explained so many things which had puzzled her.

"Ask anyone," persisted Trelawny; "you need not appeal to the Camerons—the village doctor, the clergyman, even the upper servants, any human creature who has lived in Bankshire for twenty years knows the story."

She answered nothing. She stood before him white and trembling, with a strange dazed look of suffering on her face out of which every ray of youth and hope seemed to have departed.

"I see you begin to understand," went on Trelawny; "now you see why Guy Cameron's sympathies would be on my side! And there's more you have to hear; another reason why your guardian would be glad to see you respectably married. Of course your fortune would tempt an adventurer; but it is not every man with a recognised social position who would care to marry your mother's daughter."

Still no answer, and he went on.

"The Honourable Mrs. Hazelmere did not die at the time you mention; she deprived her husband and child of her society, but probably bestowed it on someone else. She left her home suddenly and without a word of explanation. Mr. Hazelmere probably put his own construction on the act, for he sold his furniture and sailed for Africa very soon after with his infant child."

"And my mother!" the words were wrung from Brenda in her anguish; "where is she?"

"How should I know! She may be alive, starving in a garret; she may be in a pauper's grave. She had not a shilling of her own, and the man who left her daughter a splendid fortune never troubled to inquire into her fate."

A dead silence. Then he went on.

"You see, while other girls—especially other heiresses—are free to change their minds a peculiar scandal attaches to your breaking your troth. You are handicapped by the memory of your mother's career; and Sir Guy Cameron, who is an honourable man, will have scant patience with your whims."

Brenda looked at her persecutor wonderingly.

"And yet you say you love me—you profess to care for me, and yet you torture me!"

He smiled bitterly.

"My dear child, there are different sorts of love. You are the prettiest, daintiest creature I ever saw; and long ago, at London Tower, I swore to make you mine; you are to belong to me; to be mine, and mine only; the mother of my children, the partner of my life. In return, I will forgive the very sharp speeches you have made me, and will look after your comfort and well-being. You shall have everything that wealth can purchase or taste desire; you shall live like a princess, and I will be your humble adorer, only you must be mine—mine in name, and deed, and thought."

The passion in his voice frightened Brenda; he had seized hold of her hand, and the very touch of his fingers seemed to burn her flesh. She did not dare to look into his eyes, they were full of an expression that terrified her. She did not understand that the very opposition he met with added fuel to his violence; that she had to do with a man of unbridled passions, who had never yet met with a serious obstacle to his will.

"Well," he said, gravely, "what is your answer?"

"Give me time," she replied; "I must think. You have frightened me."

"I must go back to Penfold Manor to-night," said Trelawny; "I will be back in three days."

time, and then if your answer is not ready I shall go straight to your guardian."

He little guessed that Guy Cameron was so actively engaged in the search for Sir Marmaduke Tremaine that he was likely soon to demand an interview on his own score.

His scheme was a deep one; he must wring a consent from Brenda, and then be married by special license; when once she was his wife he could defy fate. If the Penfold property was wrested from him he would still have his wife's fortune. If certain crimes connected with Sir Marmaduke were brought home to him why he knew his brother would forego their punishment rather than let his vengeance fall on the child of Kenneth and Ivy Hazelmere.

It was a desperate scheme; he must be Brenda's husband, because then pity and compassion for her would induce those he had wronged to abstain from vengeance.

## CHAPTER XXII.

WHEN Lady Mary returned, she found that Brenda had gone to bed with a bad headache; she went up to see her and was troubled at her white scared face. It really seemed to Lady Mary that the girl was afraid to look at her.

"Please don't trouble about me," said Brenda, wearily. "I am not worth it, Lady Mary; sometimes I wonder you don't hate me."

Was her mind wandering, or had someone whispered to her the cruel story of the past? The lady hardly knew; but she put her arms round the trembling girl and kissed her fondly.

"I shall never hate you, Brenda," she said kindly; "you would hardly believe how dear you have grown to me; I never cared much about girls before, and when we first had your father's letter I was afraid we might not be able to make you happy; but I could not bear to part with you now, unless I knew you were going to a husband's love."

Brenda trembled.

"I wish everyone wouldn't always harp on love," she said a little irritably; "just as though there was nothing else in the world."

"There is something you need even more than love just now," said Lady Mary, not a bit ruffled by her peevish words, "and that's rest, so I shall leave you to try to go to sleep. Brenda, dear, if you are not better in the morning I mean to take the law into my own hands and send for Dr. Thornton. What will Guy say when he comes home if you are still looking such a little white ghost?"

But before she left Brenda to seek the sleep she so much needed, Lady Mary sent up a tray of refreshments; she felt the girl was too weak and exhausted to sleep without food, and Mrs. Holmes who carried out her lady's orders, placed on the tray a letter that had come by the afternoon post and been overlooked.

"Miss Hazelmere doesn't have many letters," she said to one of her fellow-servants, "and this looks like a lady's hand; it must be from her old governess and may cheer her up."

Brenda never saw the letter till she had drunk a cup of refreshing tea and swallowed a few mouthfuls of cold chicken, then she glanced at the superscription and wondered.

It was a clear round hand, rather more distinct than a lady's writing—the hand in fact—though Brenda did not know this—cultivated in the senior classes of Board-schools.

"It can't be from him," she thought feverishly, "for the postmark is London, and he said he had been here all day. I'll open it and see."

"Vine Cottage,

"Hamwynd Road, Camberwell.

"MY DEAR YOUNG MISTRESS—

"I am writing to tell you why I did not go to Mrs. Lennox, as you advised me.

"When I got to Turner-street I saw Sir Guy just coming out of her house, and I thought he might have told her all about my leaving so ungratefully.

"Dear Miss Brenda, I have found a quiet room in a nice clean old-fashioned house; there is a lady here (a real lady though very poor) who

makes children's dresses, and she lets me help her; I work faster than she does, and I think I shall soon earn enough to repay you the money you lent me.

"If my husband came I hope it did not anger Lady Mary. Oh, Miss Brenda, I can't thank you enough for helping me to escape from him; he is a bad cruel man, and I would rather die than go back to him.

"Dear Miss Brenda, if ever you need a humble friend, please remember there is nothing I would not do for you. I can never forget it was through you I got back to my native land, and that it was you who helped me now to leave the Castle.

"You are a great heiress, and never likely to need anything that I could do for you, but if the day comes you need me, I'd go to the farthest end of the world to help you.

"Your respectful servant,

"ALICE BROWNE."

And that letter cut the Gordian knot of Brenda's difficulties. She would leave Cameron Castle and take refuge with Alice Browne. She might have shrunk from going to London without the prospect of a friend or refuge there; but in Alice he had both.

There was a goodly sum still left in her purse, for the day after Alice's departure Lady Mary had given her her quarter's allowance; she need be no burden on Alice.

Of course John Trelawny would tell Sir Guy everything; he would think his ward not only wilful but false and heartless, still anything was better than having to be persuaded to marry Trelawny.

If Sir Guy told her it was her duty to keep her word; if he alluded to her mother's story, Brenda felt she might yield.

Flight was best. No one would miss her very much unless it was Lady Mary. Sir Guy would be thankful to be relieved from a very troublesome charge. Mrs. Ainslie would feel that her son had had a very lucky escape.

Very early the next morning, before the humblest servant at the Castle was stirring, the heiress of the Hazelmere passed through the great gates on her way to the station. She caught the first morning train, and though it was a slow one it reached London before the news of her flight was discovered.

Mrs. Holmes had attended on Brenda since Alice's flight, and it was she who at half-past eight sought Lady Mary with a troubled face.

"I beg your pardon, my lady, but Miss Hazelmere is not in her room."

"Foolish child to go out before breakfast," said the widow, "she is not strong enough for it."

Holmes persisted.

"I don't think she is in the grounds, my lady, and—this note was on her table."

Lady Mary opened it hurriedly.

"I know everything, and all the trouble my parents brought on you. Do not think I am following in their steps because I leave you like this. I dare not stay. I would sooner die than become his wife. He says Sir Guy will make me keep my promise, but I cannot. I was so young, and I knew nothing of the world. He was the first man I had ever seen much of, except my father, and when he said he loved me I thought he would make me happy.

"But I know better now. The very touch of his hand frightens me. If it is wrong to break my word surely it would be worse to stand at the altar and swear to love a man I hate. Forgive me if you can, dear Lady Mary, for I love you dearly.

"Your loving little friend,

"BRENDA."

"P.S.—He will be here to-morrow. Don't think more hardly of me than you can help."

Lady Mary collected her thoughts by an effort. One thing was certain. Brenda had not left her home with a lover, but to escape from one. It was a terrible thing to think of the poor child alone in London, but at least it was better than knowing she had wrecked her life by a hasty imprudent marriage. Lady Mary looked at Holmes; she knew the woman was to be trusted.

"Miss Hazelmere has run away. It seems there was someone she knew and disliked in Africa who has found out her address. Foolish child; instead of trusting to us to protect her from him, she has run away. I look to you, Holmes, to prevent there being any scandal in the household. Miss Hazelmere's flight must be kept secret at all costs."

"We'd better say Mrs. Lennox was took ill and sent for her," said Holmes, who was a woman of resources, "and that Miss Brenda was in such a way she would go by the first train. If you and I hold our tongues, my lady, there's no one need know but what you and the young lady settled every thing last night."

"That is a good idea," said Lady Mary. "Holmes, has any one been here to see Miss Hazelmere in my absence?"

"Not to see her," replied Holmes; "but Sam, the gardener's boy, told me a gentleman gave him five shillings yesterday to show him round the rose garden. Sam was called away for a moment, and when he got back the stranger had vanished. I think it will be a lesson to the boy, my lady; he was in a mortal fright lest the man should have stolen some fruit or flowers. I gave him a good scolding; but I think the fright was punishment enough."

"From the rose-garden anyone could get on to the terrace. Brenda was alone in the drawing-room all yesterday afternoon, and the glass doors leading on to the terrace were open—I begin to see it all."

"He was quite the gentleman Sam said," went on Mrs. Holmes; "tall and dark, my lady, and sunburnt, as though he'd lived in a hot climate. He began by telling Sam he was a rose fancier; but the boy said he didn't seem to know much about them. He asked if you were out, and when Sir Guy was expected home."

Lady Mary sighed.

"I wish I had Sir Guy's address. I should telegraph to him at once. I will drive into town and wire to Mrs. Lennox. No, I can't send the message by a groom, Holmes; don't you see that would betray what we most want to hide—that Brenda is missing. At any cost that secret must be kept."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

ALICE BROWNE had only spoken the truth in her letter; she was getting on very comfortably. It is a strange industrial fact that people who only do plain needlework generally live within an ace of starvation, those who undertake "a little dressmaking" make it pay.

Mrs. Nairn had got a little connection together, and as her prices were moderate, and her work neat, she generally had as much as she could do. But she was a very slow worker. She had never been trained to dressmaking, and she took about three times as long as other people to make child's frock.

Alice Browne (who had "served her time" with a good milliner, so as to be a superior maid) got over the ground at marvellous speed, and was of so much use to the gentle widow that she was soon engaged as her regular assistant.

Mrs. Nairn was very kind to her fellow-lodger; but she never confided in her more than she had done on the first night of their meeting. Alice felt in a vague way that there was a mystery about her friend, and that it was no ordinary trouble which had bleached Mrs. Nairn's locks.

"If it wasn't for leaving my young lady I should be quite happy here," said Alice, one morning as they sat at work; "but I can't help thinking of her, and wondering how she's getting on. She was such a pretty creature, and with hardly anyone belonging to her, though Sir Guy and Lady Mary took all the care anyone could of her."

"And her name was Brenda Hazelmere."

"Why, I never remember telling you so, but of course I must have. Yes, her name was Brenda Hazelmere. She was Miss Norton when I knew her first. Her father had changed his name when he went abroad; but she went back to Hazelmere as soon as she got to England."

"Did you ever see him?"



"Who? Mr. Norton? Never; he had died just before I came to Miss Brenda. She was his only child, and she missed him terribly, though I did hear he was a gloomy, austere man, keeping her shut up as strictly, as if she'd been a nun."

"And her mother?"

"Oh, she'd been dead for years and years. Mrs. Lennox, her old governess, was just like a mother to her; but she didn't go to Cameron Castle with us. She took a house not far from here, at Kennington."

"A strange place to live in," commented Mrs. Nairn, "unless she is very poor."

"I think she is comfortably off. It was to seek out a cousin of her's she settled here, I believe. I've heard Miss Brenda say so."

"A cousin isn't a very near relation."

"No; but these two had been move like sisters. I lived at Cameron Castle as a child, you see, and so I couldn't help catching up little bits of the family history."

"Have you written to your young lady?"

"Yes." Alice blushed in rather a shamed-faced manner. "It was an odd thing to do, perhaps, as she was so rich and I am so poor; but you see I loved Miss Brenda dearly, and I wanted her to know where I was."

"Do you expect her to answer your letter?"

"I think she'll write to me. Not just directly, perhaps, but later on. I only posted my letter yesterday morning. I wish now I'd asked her to send me her picture. She was so beautiful, I'd like to show it to you, Mrs. Nairn."

They were interrupted. Mrs. Fox came bustling in with rather an important face.

"There's a young lady wanting you, Miss Brenda. I've shown her into your room."

Alice, who for the convenience of their work mostly sat with Mrs. Nairn, took off her thimble and departed, wondering.

But when she opened the door, and caught sight of the forlorn little figure standing on the hearth, her face changed. She forgot the gulf between them socially, forgot that Brenda was a rich and powerful heiress, while she was a poor needlewoman. She remembered only their common womanhood, and going up to her unexpected guest she put one hand on her arm, and said, tenderly,—

"Miss Brenda, dear Miss Brenda, whatever your trouble is I'm thankful you have come to me; but, oh! what is the matter? What can have happened to change you so terribly in the last few days?"

"I've run away!" said Brenda, brokenly. "Oh, Alice, I'm in great trouble, and there's no one in the world who I can trust. Oh, be true to me. Don't betray me."

"I'll be true to you while life lasts, Miss Brenda, dear," said Alice, warmly. "Only trust me."

Brenda hesitated.

"Your husband must have been a bad man, or you'd never have been driven from him, Alice. Well, a bad man wants me to marry him; I can't prove that he's bad, only I seem to know it; but anyone would say I ought to marry him because I promised him long ago, before I knew what he really was; and so I've run away."

"But, Miss Brenda, dear," said Alice, "no one could persuade you to marry a bad man. Why didn't you trust Lady Mary or Sir Guy?"

"Sir Guy is away. I couldn't bear to tell Lady Mary. Let me live with you, Alice. I am not afraid of work. Long ago I used to think I should be quite happy if only I could live in England. Well, I am in England now and I am miserable. I want nothing but to hide myself."

She broke into a fit of bitter sobbing, and Alice seeing she was terribly excited did not attempt to reason with her, but soothed her to the best of her power, assuring her she was quite safe now. No one would think of looking for her in Hauntynd-road. There was one room to let at the cottage, and Alice would look after her and wait upon her just as she had done at the Castle.

"And you'll never let them find me!" pleaded Brenda. "Oh! Alice, if Sir Guy came here and reproached me with breaking my word I think it would kill me. If he despised me I should never be able to hold up my head again. Promise me, come what may, you won't betray me!"

Alice soothed her as well as she could, and then,

at Brenda's own suggestion, left her to confer with Mrs. Fox.

"I have some money, you know," Brenda told her; "enough to last for ever so long; and I'll pay just what she asks, if she'll let me stay with you."

Mrs. Fox was willing enough. The vacant room was very small, but Alice decided to make shift with it herself, and give up her own apartment to the young lady.

"She'll give you an trouble," she told Mrs. Fox; "I'll wait on her myself, and it won't be for long, her friends will soon find out where she is and look for her."

"She's welcome to the room," said Mrs. Fox, "if she can pay the rent; but I hope she's not going to be took with anything catching, she looks awful bad; and there's scarlet fever and all sorts of things about."

And when Alice went back to the room where she had left Brenda she began to share the landlady's fears; not indeed of infection, but that her young lady was going to be very ill, for Brenda was lying back in the big old-fashioned chair; her feverishly-bright eyes seemed to wander round the room without really seeing anything, while all the time she was talking to herself in a dreamy far-off sort of voice of Africa and London Tower and the stranger's grave among the blue gum trees.

"She's quite off her head," said Mrs. Fox; "you'd better send for a doctor."

"She'll be better soon," said Alice; "I'll sit here with my work and look after her; she's only over tired, and being light-headed isn't catching, Mrs. Fox."

But as the hours wore on Alice grew really alarmed. Brenda did not know her; she was terribly restless, and though she looked worn out with exhaustion she never ceased talking.

And her wanderings were always on the same theme; of the summer evening when the post-cart had stopped at London Tower bringing the two unexpected guests; of the poor lad who died in her father's house, and of the friend who survived.

"To make my misery," moaned Brenda, in her delirium; "my misery! Oh! why did I ever see his face!"

Alice had undressed her and put her to bed; then, more really alarmed than she dared to confess, she crossed the passage to Mrs. Nairn's room and begged her to sit with the invalid while she fetched a doctor.

"I think she's only over excited and knocked up, but I'd rather a doctor saw her."

"Miss Hazelmere might not like to see a stranger," suggested Mrs. Nairn.

"Poor dear, she's past knowing friends from strangers. I can't leave her alone."

"I'll go willingly."

Mrs. Nairn closed the house-door noiselessly on Alice, and then entered the room where Brenda lay tossing restlessly from side to side; the pale and face was radiant with tenderness as she kissed the fevered brow, for this was Ivy Hazelmere, and now, after the lapse of years, the baby-girl she had lost was restored to her a woman grown.

(To be continued.)

ONE species of the Great Danubian Catfish has managed to take up its abode in Europe. This is the wels of the Germans, the true silurus, from which the family as a whole derives its name of silurids. It occurs in the Danube and other Eastern rivers, but has never made its way into the Rhine or any streams to the west of it. Except the sturgeon, the wels is the biggest, and the ugliest, of European fresh water fishes. Its huge, gaping mouth, its soft, slimy skin, its six big barbels, and its murderous expression, all combine to render it peculiarly hideous. Some specimens reach the length of sixteen feet, and turn the scale at four hundred pound, but these figures, being fisherman's weight, may be accepted by the wise *cum grano salis*. According to Yarrell, a Prussian specimen of silurus had the entire body of a baby in its stomach; but a noble Hungarian catfish goes this story one better, for it is said to have contained "the body of a young woman with a wedding ring on her finger and a purse full of money hanging at her girdle."

## STRAYED AWAY.

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### CHAPTER XXVII.

#### IN PURE FRIENDSHIP.

PERCY, far away on the German border-land, waited with all the anxiety of love for Fanny's reply to his letter. The builder's son had the virtue of constancy, and the one good affection of his life proved more true and lasting than might have been expected in a man of his character—for his career had not been of the sort that cultivates the better nature of mankind.

"She has written at least twenty letters," he said between his teeth, when the softer emotions evoked by the sight of the familiar writing had calmed down, "and I have suffered tortures, wondering what had become of her. I must see into this!"

There was an expression in his eyes that boded little good for the delinquent who had intercepted their correspondence. Fanny's words touched him keenly,—

"I cannot bear to think that the little love secrets that should be sacred to ourselves have been read by another."

"And by a sneaking spy," he muttered. "All the precious words that would have given me comfort, and made me feel less like a coward and a villain, suppressed, and perhaps grinned over by him! And she might have been in want—has been, poor girl, driven back to slave at her needle for our child. I have heard stories of such devotion," he added more gently, "but I never believed them till now."

The post-office was half-a-dozen miles from the hotel where Percy was staying, and he had never taken the trouble to call personally for his letters; he usually sent one of his assistants, Kirby by name, a sort of odd man.

Useful and obliging, and willing to do anything, he had crept into Percy's confidence—Percy could scarcely tell how.

Percy mounted his horse, and rode over to the post-office to make investigations. He spoke German with facility, and the postmaster was very civil to the Englishman.

"Have you ever had any private instructions concerning letters addressed to me?" Percy inquired. "I know such things are done, and I have reason to believe it has been done with me."

The German reflected before he replied.

Percy had to help him by giving the dates of the missing letters as nearly as he could, and at last a dim glimmering of intelligence appeared to struggle into existence.

Presently he answered in the affirmative.

"Yes, the man who has always called for your letters pointed out some that were never to be given to anyone but himself; by your orders, he said."

"Did he? And how were you to recognise those letters?"

"He left me the envelope of the first that came."

"Have you that envelope now?"

"Yes."

It was produced—empty. The letter must, therefore, have been removed and read.

"How many of those letters did you receive and keep for him?" said Percy, putting the envelope into his own pocket.

The German referred to a book.

"We are particular in affairs of this kind," he said. "I can give you the date and postmark of every letter so received. There were three-and-twenty."

At that time letters were stamped with the locality of the office at which they were posted. District stamps were in use in all the suburbs.

Most of the letters mentioned by the German bore the Holloway postmark. There was only one from Baker-street, and Percy had the envelope of that in his pocket.

So there were three-and-twenty letters that had been kept from him! and Percy pictured to himself how the poor girl must have watched and waited in painful hope for a response to each one of those attempts to reach him.

He could picture her agony of suspense, the fear that must have come, the sinking down of faith into a dread of neglect and desertion.

He thanked the German for his polite assistance, and rode back to his hotel. Then he sent for Mr. Kirby.

That individual answered the summons with his accustomed alacrity. He had not the remotest dream of the trial in store for him.

"Kirby," said Percy, with the quiet tone and slow, distinct articulation that always meant mischief in him, "you are, I think, rather a confidential man with my father? It was, in fact, at his particular recommendation that I had you with me?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Kirby began to wonder what was coming; he could not quite understand his master's manner.

"Did he entrust you with any peculiar commission concerning me?"

The man's eyes wavered uneasily. He shifted one foot, then the other, and looked anywhere to avoid the penetrating gaze fixed upon him.

"No, sir," he said, at last.

"You have invariably fetched my correspondence from the post-office?"

"Not always. I am very sorry anything has gone wrong."

"So am I, and so will you be. Tell me how it is that there are three-and-twenty letters missing, including the one that should be in this envelope. And tell me why you instructed the postmaster to deliver those letters only to you—to keep them back from anyone else."

Mr. Kirby glanced more uneasily than ever at two things on the table—one was the envelope, the other a singularly slender and flexible horsewhip.

"I hope you will not blame me, sir," he said, humbly. "Mr. Falkland told me to do it, and said it was for your good."

"Thanks for your interest in me; but go on. What became of the letters?"

"I sent them to your father—every one."

"Except this."

"That too, sir."

"After you had read."

"I did not read a line," said Kirby; but his face convicted him, and his last hope of mercy was gone.

"You played the part of a spy—a sneaking, treacherous cur!" said Percy, rising, whip in hand. "You took a paltry reward, and intercepted the correspondence of a lady whose every hour of happiness I value more than I value your worthless life. You shall leave this place to-day; return to my father and tell him I have discovered the scheme. I cannot punish him because he is my father; but you shall suffer for both."

Kirby was a young man, sturdy, well knit, and under ordinary circumstances anything but a coward. But there were habits of respect and obedience to be overcome before he could raise a hand in self-defence against his master's son. Still his brow darkened ominously when the whip was raised, and he grappled with Percy at the first blow.

The well-trained muscles of young Falkland were more than a match for the rough, untutored strength of the fellow, and the lash fell upon him heavily.

"So far I have kept my promise," said Percy, as he let go his hold. "Do not let me see your face again in H&C's C&S. You have got nothing more than you deserve. If my father had not found a tool so ready to do his dirty work that dirty work would never have been done."

Kirby muttered something under his breath as he went out. There was murder in his eye—implacable, fierce hatred in his heart. It was a hatred that might be forgotten or grow weaker as time went on; but it was a hatred that would take full revenge if ever an opportunity for revenge occurred.

Half an hour later Percy, calm as before—calmer, perhaps, for the excitement had spent itself—sat down to write to Fanny. He told her that he had discovered the treachery and punished the traitor.

Henceforth their correspondence could be regular and unbroken, he said, in the long letter that he sent, and he was making arrangements for a return to England, if it were only for a week; and he enclosed her English bank-notes to the amount of one hundred pounds; so the days began to look brighter than ever for Fanny.

But what pleased her most was his praise of her devotion—the faith that even when she thought herself neglected made her hide away and live by toil rather than go home and imperil their secret.

"I shall give you a pleasant surprise some of these days," he said. "When you and baby come home from a walk you will find me waiting for you in that precious Maple-street. I can imagine that street—I know Piccadilly so well—but you had better remain there till I come home, as you are used to the place, and we can make arrangements together. Perhaps you shall come back with me to Germany."

He meant that partial promise when he made it, though it was a promise more easily made than kept.

A young and handsome English gentleman like Percy was very welcome in the H&C's C&S society while he was considered free and eligible—a wife would have been something of an encumbrance, especially as he dared not acknowledge her yet.

But the promise delighted Fanny. She looked only at the thought of being with him. She thought of it with so much pleasure, that Arthur Wilson's words involuntarily recurred to her.

"Nothing is so selfish as love," he had said.

"The very root of love is selfishness. It makes us slight our kindred, disobey our parents, neglect our social duties, forsake our friends, break every old sweet tie, no matter what pain it may cause those from whom we break, so that we can isolate ourselves with the chosen one."

And Fanny had done all these—she was willing to do more. She had left her parents and forsaken her friends, and she could be more content alone with Percy in a strange land than without him with her friends and kindred round her.

Mr. Wilson called upon her to see the result of the letter, and though she received him cordially, there was a great change.

Fanny was no longer dependent upon his friendship and sympathy. She was no longer the neglected, sorrowful girl, grateful for his brotherly affection, because, except for him, she was quite alone.

"Did I bring welcome tidings?" Mr. Wilson asked, and she answered gladly in the affirmative. The young man could not suppress a sigh.

"Yet I ought to be content, so that she is happy," he thought. "It were useless to point out the consequence of her infatuation. She will love him to the last, even should it bring her to misery."

"I may come and see you sometimes," he said. "The present is not everything, and perhaps you will find me useful, Frances. Is he coming home?"

She assented with a gesture of the head.

"Then we shall have to separate."

"No, Mr. Wilson, we shall not," said Fanny, decidedly.

Her determination not to see him again vanished when he spoke and looked like that. "Loving me as he does, Percy cannot be less than grateful to one who was so truly my friend in my bitterest hour of trial."

"We shall see."

He smiled sadly, and then they talked of other things. Fanny was glad of his society. He stayed away for a few days, and she missed him very much, receiving him on his next visit with such surprised pleasure that he rarely let an evening pass without seeing her.

"Percy cannot be angry with a pure friendship like ours," Fanny reflected, when debating within herself whether her interviews with Arthur Wilson passed the boundary of the proprieties.

"But he has a very jealous temper, and sometimes I am almost afraid."

She felt that circumstances had placed her in a curious dilemma. She must either run the risk of Percy's jealousy or keep a secret from him; in either case a dangerous thing to do.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ESTRANGEMENT.

THE letter that Fanny longed for more than all the rest came soon, and Percy told her he would soon be home.

His love, reawakened into ardour, would not let him rest, and he made early arrangements for leaving Germany.

He could not be spared from the works for any length of time, and he scarcely dared mention to his father that he premeditated leaving them at all; but the young man had cultivated a sense of independence since he had tried and found his worth in the German contract.

Yet there was some wisdom in the feeling that made him reluctant to brave his father's anger by avowing his marriage, and taking Fanny down to Penge as Mrs. Percy Falkland. Such a proceeding at present would, he knew, lead to an irreconcilable quarrel and a total separation between him and his family, estrange him from his friends, and destroy his hope of ever inheriting his father's wealth.

Percy was less afraid of work since he had grown accustomed to it; but he did not relish the idea of having to work throughout his lifetime. And it was not that alone; he thought that by a judicious course of action he might reconcile his family to his marriage, and be on friendly terms with his father.

He explained those ideas fully to Fanny in the letter that announced his return.

"There are so many prejudices to overcome," he said. "My mother—good old soul—affects the Penge aristocracy, and my sisters are seriously afflicted with fine-ladyism. My father is an autocrat in his way; the self-made man are the hardest on those who have not made themselves. If your father were a rich old money-grubber—a member of the heavy plutocracy—if he could not write his name, and if his mark stood for a few thousands, my respected paternal would give him the hand of friendship."

"As it is, I must try the diplomatic—be the most dutiful of sons and the kindest of brothers. I must reach my mother through my sisters, and my father through my mother. I must do the pathetic and the sentimental; make you, if possible, more beautiful, refined, and intelligent than you are. I must work upon their sympathies till the time is ripe for confession, and then we shall have a grand tableau of parental forgiveness and sisterly affection."

"It will be better so, my pet. No man has a right to throw away a chance of reconciliation, and under himself from his friends. I could set them at defiance easily, but I think the gentler means the better. A little patience, and my wife will be received into society, welcomed by my sisters for her own sake as well as mine. My sisters are very good girls when you know them."

Fanny liked him better than ever for the thoughtful wisdom of that letter—it revealed the sterling goodness of a heart that love had purified. She, of course, would have been content to dwell with him in a desert—or, say, a snug little cottage, where they could be quite away from the world, and find sufficient happiness in each other's society.

Still, it would be more pleasant to be received and have pleasant social intercourse with his family. A girl, no matter how stoical affection may make her, does not like to be looked down upon by her husband's friends. Fanny felt herself fully their equal, and sometimes she thought fate had been a little hard upon her in giving her old Bill West for a father, and Falkland-row for a birthplace.

It was a curious sense of pride. She was ashamed of her parents when she ought to have been proud of herself for proving that lowly birth and humble training could not conquer the delicacy of her instincts, and the superiority of her mind.

Percy was coming home. He had even fixed the day when she might be certain of his arrival, and she broke the news gently to Arthur Wilson as an intimation that his visits had better cease.

"I know—I know," he said, sadly, "and I



shall leave my Eden with more regret than you can ever feel."

"I am afraid you think too much of me," said Fanny, quietly. "There are other women better and more worthy of you than I am, even if I were free."

"And you are not. Will the fetters ever be broken?"

"Never, I hope," said the girl, so earnestly that Arthur looked at her with a dim suspicion that had come to him more than once of late. It was a suspicion of the truth, for he knew Fanny's nature so well that he believed her fully capable of sacrificing even her good name for the man she loved.

"If it were that," he thought, "the dream would end. I could go the old world way passive, if not content—meet with some pretty doll, with whom and myself there would be about as much sympathy as there is between earth and sky—something that would be content with the hum-drum respectability of an existence made up of the rate-collector, the landlord, the household tradesmen, and the milliner—something that would be content to dress herself for me to look at; nurse my children sometimes; strum on the piano, and drive me mad with the trivial nonsense that women of the day delight in. Bahl! how the soul sinks at the prospect, rebels against being compelled to plod in the beaten track—living as others have lived, doing nothing more than others have done, dying like the rest—merely dying."

Fanny could tell by the play of his features that the tone of his reflections was bitter.

"Don't you think," he asked suddenly, "that it is a pity two between whom there is such sympathy did not meet earlier?"

"Perhaps. But is the question wise now?"

"Ah, Frances! a woman can be calm and strong with the man she does not care for, when she is strengthened by her love for another."

"This is not fair," she said reproachfully. "We might be such good friends if you were wiser. Some of these days I shall have to say I will never see or speak to you any more."

"Then I shall wait patiently till you want me, and you will want me, remember; and, remember, that no matter in what circumstances you came, you will be welcome here."

He touched his breast with an action of singular grace. The strong, strange love would not be vanquished.

"When is he coming?" Arthur asked, with the involuntary bitterness of tone with which he always referred to Percy.

"On the tenth."

"And this is the seventh. I have only to see you twice more, Frances, and then farewell."

"Just for a time; until he brings me to Paxton-street to thank you and Mrs. Wilson, as he will, when I have told him everything."

Arthur dissented silently.

"For these two evenings," he said, "we are to be the friends of old, and not a whisper, not a thought of him shall disturb our way. We will have a long ramble on the last evening, Frances, for we may never meet again."

There was much resignation in his voice, the quiet sadness of one who felt that he was giving up his lost love to her fate.

They went for that last ramble on the evening of the ninth, and Percy arrived while they were away.

He had travelled night and day, taking no rest, and so he reached London that evening instead of the following morning.

He was bitterly disappointed, when on inquiring for Mrs. Percy the landlady informed him she was out.

"For long?" he inquired.

"Not very long," replied Mrs. Naylor, wondering who this second handsome gentleman could be. "She is only with Mr. Wilson, and they are never late."

"With whom?" said Percy, knitting his brows in surprise.

"Mr. Wilson, sir; a very nice gentleman, and a very intimate friend, sir. He is here night every day."

It tried Percy's gentlemanly self-control most

severely to hear this, and keep his features from exposing his displeasure.

He wanted to know more of Mr. Wilson. Fanny had mentioned a Mrs. Wilson in her letter, but not a word of Mr. Wilson.

"Will you step in and wait, sir, if it's particular? In the front parlour, please, sir, and I will let Mrs. Percy know directly she comes in."

Percy walked in and waited. The landlady, unconscious of the fatal injury she was doing, went on talking of her lodger and Mr. Wilson till the darkest and worst suspicions arose in his breast.

"I am sure she won't be long," said Mrs. Naylor, mistaking his nervous agitation for impatient waiting. "My Polly is upstairs, nursing her baby, and she never leaves the little thing late."

Her baby—his baby. Percy would have bounded up the stairs to see the infantile treasure that had formed such a large portion of his anticipated pleasure in coming home; but he was on the rack with jealous doubt. He would wait and see who this Mr. Wilson was.

He had not to wait long. He sat in the parlour, with the door partly open, when Fanny, never dreaming of his presence, came home with Arthur. He heard them talking in the passage.

"This is our farewell, Frances," said the deep, rich voice of Mr. Wilson—"that to-morrow, so happy for you, so wretched for me! It is like giving you up for ever to part now!"

"Don't speak so sadly, Arthur. Ours was a dream that could not go on for ever. You must forget me."

"I will try."

Then Percy distinctly heard a long and passionate kiss, and the utterance of a few emotional words in farewell. The door closed on Mr. Wilson. Fanny sighed as she went upstairs.

"I must not see him again," she thought. "It was wrong of him to kiss me like that; but he looked so despairing that I could not help pitying him."

At that moment—as she turned towards her bed room to fetch baby—Percy entered, and she leaped towards him with a cry of joy; but he swept her from him with a fierce motion of the arm. The savage, jealous fury on his face was tiger-like.

"Did I come home for this?" he whispered, with an oath. "Wretched, shameless girl! Hypocrite! liar! Where was your faith?"

In an instant she comprehended the fatal error into which he had fallen, and she knelt, clinging to his hand, mute with beseeching terror. But Percy turned his face away in angry doubt.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### QUITE DISCARDED.

MR. FAULKLAND did not care for an explanation. He did not listen, and would not believe. Nothing is more cruel, unreasoning, and cowardly than jealousy, and Percy was a very jealous man.

"If you knew him," said Fanny—"how good, how noble, how kind he is—you would not so misjudge me. I tell you sacredly, dear Percy, that we are innocent of even the slightest shadow of wrong. It was so unfortunate that you came just then."

He laughed bitterly.

"Very, for you, or I might have remained in happy ignorance that you encouraged the visits of a stranger even to the hour of my coming home. You need not kneel, madam, and you need not cry. Tears are wept easily—as easily as falsehoods are spoken."

"But I am innocent—indeed I am."

"One would scarcely expect you to confess your guilt," he said, in sarcastic scorn. "But you will permit me to use my own judgment. I hear that my wife is in the habit of receiving the visits of a gentleman with whom she is on terms so intimate as to excite remark. I am kind enough to doubt what I hear until you save me further trouble by proving the truth."

"Mr. Wilson is only a friend."

"I have the old-fashioned prejudice of an English husband against such friends, and I do

not care to divide a woman's love with anyone—and I should be sorry to break such a pleasant intimacy. Your friend and you are welcome to each other."

Mr. Falkland did not raise his voice. He remembered that to be violent was to be ungentlemanly, so he spoke quietly, though his soul was full of fury. He was polite and sarcastic, though he felt himself wronged; and his heart ached, for he loved her.

"Percy, dear," said Fanny, in a voice that quivered with anguish at his anger and his disbelief, "if you would let me tell you everything, you would see how innocent I am. I have been indiscreet, perhaps—thoughtless, but guilty, never. My love has never left you for a moment, and I have looked forward to this meeting with such joy. I have never been false to you, Percy—never, as I hope to rise again."

His lip curled.

"A woman's idea of falsity is such an elastic one," he sneered. "If we lived in a pastoral age, and if men were angels, I might see no harm in my wife receiving visits and exchanging kisses with a stranger. I am sorry that I have disturbed the pretty little comedy. My part in it is to retire from the scene with good grace, and leave you to the idol of your choice. There shall be no scandal, believe me. I do not blame your hero, Mr. Wilson. I have no intention of calling him out, and shooting him. I have no intention of acting the part of the outraged husband for his amusement. I have no intention of entering into rivalry with him, for the sake of your love."

The cold sarcasm struck Fanny with despair. The emotion had gradually left his face, and it was white and rigid as stone.

"Rash and shameful as your conduct has been, I will not leave you to the mercy of the world," he went on. "You shall have the income that my father has allotted you, and you can keep our secret or not, as you please. Should you divulge it, I shall take immediate steps to repudiate you. I do not desire to make a public parade of my sorrow and your sin in a divorce court, but if you force the necessity upon me I shall not shrink from it. I will bear that fetter that debars me for ever from the society of one who might love and honour me. Even if I were free I should not care to incur the risk of a second disappointment."

"Percy—Percy," she murmured, "you are killing me!"

"Well, you have destroyed two lives," he said, moodily, "for mine is a wreck, and yours is lost. I hope that he for whom you have made the sacrifice is worthy of it."

He made an attempt to pass her and reach the door, but she clung to his knees. He would not look at the pale, wistful face; it would have unnerved him, and left him unable to do what he thought was his duty.

"Our baby," she moaned.

"You must give him up. He shall be sent for and taken care of. And let me go. If you were lying dead at my feet I should have no more faith in your innocence than I have now."

He unclasped her hands, and moved away. Fanny gazed at him in a kind of stupor, and as he opened the door the whole dreadful truth flashed upon her, the stern gaze gazed at her for a moment in agonized regret, and then he was gone. She fell forward on her face in a deep and dangerous swoon. He heard a low cry, but did not turn back.

Out in the street he gave way to the silent bitterness of reflection. He was grievously disappointed. The testimony of an angel would not have shaken his conviction that Fanny had wronged him. He measured a woman's duty to her husband by the strictest line, and gave Fanny no mercy for her indiscretion. Caesar may have little weaknesses of his own, but Caesar's wife must be above suspicion.

(To be continued.)

SPECTACLES were worn only by people of means in the sixteenth century, as they cost not less than £3 a pair, and the larger the lenses and heavier the rims the more they were sought after.

## FACETIÆ.

"SIR, I need a change." Head of Firm: "All right. Try getting down to the office at 8.30 every morning instead of 10."

A.: "Do you know that man we just met?" B.: "Yes. He's a sort of relative of mine. He married the girl I was engaged to."

DAN: "What's the matter, old man! Can't you find your umbrella?" VAN: "Gad! I'm not trying to—I'm looking for a better one."

MURRY: "Why is that new boarder over at the other table raising a fuss about the oyster soup?" CRUSTY: "Maybe he found an oyster in it."

TEACHER: "Now, who can tell me which travels the faster—heat or cold?" JOHNNY (promptly): "Heat, of course. Anybody can catch cold."

FRIEND: "And you are very happy?" BRIDE: "Very. Almost every day I hear of some other girl who would have jumped at the chance to marry my husband."

MOTHER (looking into room): "What's Franky crying for?" WILLY: "He's crying for my cake." MOTHER: "Naughty boy! What did he do with the piece I gave him?" WILLY: "Oh, I ate his up first!"

PIKE: "I wonder if the English people will ever abolish the House of Lords?" TYKE: "Well, if they do, the House of Lords won't know anything about it until about fifty years after it has happened."

BOARDING-HOUSE MISTRESS (at Sunday dinner): "Mr. Lightweight, why do you not eat some chicken?" MR. LIGHTWEIGHT (who has laboured fifteen minutes trying to carve a leg): "Thanks; I never work on Sunday."

"WHY, Wallace," said five-year-old Marion who was a visitor, "I'm as hungry as you are and I didn't cry when your mamma said we couldn't have another biscuit before dinner." "Of course not. You ain't at home," retorted Wallace.

TIMMINS: "I am afraid I am getting old. A giggling girl is becoming a nuisance to me." SIMMONS: "You are not getting old; you are merely getting middle-aged. When you begin to grow old you will commence liking giggling girls again."

INSURANCE AGENT: "I'm sorry to say, sir, that the company has declined to issue a policy on your life." APPLICANT: "Why? Is the doctor's report unfavourable?" INSURANCE AGENT: "Oh, not at all; but you occasionally act as referee at football matches."

A LADY had just lost her husband. A gentleman living next door, on calling to see her, found her, to his great surprise, playing on the harp, and said: "Dear me! I expected to find you in deep distress." "Ah!" the lady pathetically replied, "you should have seen me yesterday."

"SHALL I write out Dodson's bill?" asked the clerk. "No," returned the head of the firm, after some deliberation. "I think you'd better have it printed. Get about a hundred copies or so. You'll need that number before he pays it, and time and money will be saved in the end."

"I don't see why Ethel is always so popular with the men," she remarked. "Well," he replied, "it goes to show that business-like methods pay the best in the end. She has a reputation for the greatest promptness in returning a ring when the engagement is broken."

"DARLING," he said, "do you think your father divines my purpose?" The lovely girl did not ponder at all. She answered at once. "Reginald," she whispered, "I think he suspects. For upwards of a week now he has devoted an hour each afternoon to practising the drop-kick with a bag of sand."

LOBBY LOUNGER: "How was the play last night?" FRONTER: "Wonderful! Most artistic and dramatic production seen in years. Held the audience spell-bound from first to last. Why, sir, in some of the thrilling situations there were times when not a sound could be heard but the hard breathing of Othello, the suppressed sobs of Desdemona, and the conversation in the boxes."

IRATE CUSTOMER: "See here! All my friends are laughing at this suit I bought of you. They say it's a mile too big." DEALER (gently): "Mine friend, I know de clothing peaness better dan your friends do. Shust you wait till it rains."

BOY: "Grandpa, I wish you'd buy me a pony." GRANDPA (a philanthropist): "My son, think of the poor boys who can't even get bread to eat." BOY: "I was thinkin' of them—the poor little boys whose papas have ponies to sell and nobody will buy."

LITTLE PAUL was sent with a bunch of flowers to a lady on her birthday, and waited in silence after he had been dismissed. Lady: "Well, my little man, what are you waiting for now?" PAUL: "Mamma said I was not to ask for a piece of cake, but wait till I got it." He got the cake.

EXAMINING PHYSICIAN (for insurance company): "I'm afraid we can't take you, sir. You are too great a risk." APPLICANT (resignedly): "Well, perhaps I am. The fact is, that when I get sick I never send for a doctor. I just lay around until I get well." EXAMINING PHYSICIAN: "Eh! Um—we'll take you."

BOBBY: "Sister will be down in a few minutes, Mr. Softly; she's upstairs rehearsing." MR. SOFTLY (who has come prepared): "W—hat, is she rehearsing, B—bobby?" BOBBY: "I don't know; but she's standing in front of the mirror and blushing, and saying, 'Oh, Mr. Softly—or this is so sudden!'"

EDITH: "I hate that Mr. Wilson!" SADIE: "Why, what has happened? I thought you liked him ever so much!" EDITH: "He said I couldn't whistle, and just to show him I could, I pucker up my mouth, just as sweet and round—and what do you think he did?" SADIE (blushing): "How should I know?" EDITH: "Well, the little fool just let me whistle!"

THE minister forgot to perform the duty at the proper time, but remembered the omission before entering the pulpit to preach. The result was that he announced: "I publish the banns of marriage between John M. widower, and Elizabeth N., spinster;" and without a pause or introduction of any kind, he then read out the text of his sermon, "And the last state of that man is worse than the first."

"I BELIEVE a woman's sphere is the home." The lady of advanced ideas—and years—gazed at him scornfully as he spoke the words. "You forget," her tone was harsh and strident—"you are addressing a New Woman!" "Yes," he said, "now they call 'em new women, but—here he added emphasis—"it used to be old maids." Afterwards she was heard to allude to him as a brute, so there!

A CERTAIN superintendent of schools had a way of thundering questions at the children that completely deprived them of their wits. One day he called the third-reader class to stand upon the floor, and began a promiscuous catechism. At last, pointing his finger at a small, shrinking figure at the end of the class, he shouted: "You there! What do you understand by climate?" The answer came in a weak scared voice, "Get up it, sir."

A BRIGHT youth undergoing examination for admission to one of the Government departments found himself confronted with the question: "What is the distance from the earth to the sun?" "Not knowing the exact number of miles," he wrote in reply; "I am unable to state accurately; but I don't believe the sun is near enough to interfere with the proper performance of my duties if I get this clerkship." He passed his examination.

WIFE: "My dear, I need a little more of this stuff, and some trimming to match. I wish you would drop into Biggs, Sale & Co's and get it." HUSBAND (a smart fellow): "Let me see. Oh, I know. That's the store where they have so many pretty girls, isn't it?" "Y-e-s." "Yes, I remember. That blonde girl at the trimming-counter knows your tastes and will doubtless select just the sort of trimming you want—I mean the girl with the golden hair, alabaster skin, blue eyes, and sweet little— There are a number of things I want down town. Never mind, dear. I'll go and get them myself."

AT AN "AT HOME," given by a country gentleman's wife, the footman had to do duty for a butler. The said footman was much astonished at the thin bread-and-butter with which he served his mistress's guests. As he was serving an ancient dowager for the fourth time he said to her, in a voice which was meant for a whisper, but which was audible to the whole room: "If you slap three or four slices together, mum, maybe you can get a bite."

RECENTLY in a West End drawing-room a fashionable young lady of good family was introduced to a rich American girl from Chicago. During the course of their conversation the English girl, whose father was a famous lawyer, said: "Father was called to the Bar when quite a young man, and still keeps at it." "You don't tell!" said the fair Chicagoan. "Why, pop was there, too, and started a long time ago, but has retired now. He said he just guessed he wasn't going to stay mixing drinks all his life."

YOUNG FARMER MEDDERS (at tea): "What in Heaven's name is the matter with the cake, Gloriosa?" BRIDE (a London girl): "Why, darling, there can surely be nothing the matter with it! I followed the recipe exactly. Maybe it was the fault of the eggs. I thought eggs were soft and yellow inside, but these were white and brittle all the way through, and I had to powder them with the flat-iron and— "Where did you find them?" "In the hen-house, darling. There was only one egg in each nest, and— "Gloriosa, you have used my china nest-eggs!"

IN a provincial town a gentleman was surprised to recognise the face of a person who was hawking shoe-strings and buttonhooks at a street corner, as that of one of his regimental comrades in the war. He went up to the man, greeted him warmly, and assured him of his sympathy. He was much grieved, he said, to see an old soldier in such a plight. When he had expressed himself at some length in this manner he was suddenly interrupted by his former acquaintance. "I'm much obliged for your pity," he remarked, drily; "but how many pairs of shoe-strings will you buy?"

HE was plunged into the vortex of perplexity, and the girl was standing resolutely upon the brink, gazing down at him. He looked up at her helplessly. "And you object to my calling so frequently?" "Yes," she said. "And I am not to be your escort on all occasions, as heretofore?" "No." "Nor call you Kate?" "No." "Nor think of you any longer as my sweetheart?" "No." He gazed upon her as a man standing at the station gazes at the train he has just lost. "Well," he groaned, "the end of our romance has come, and there is nothing for us to do but get married." The beauty's dark eyes beamed with triumph.

AN old lady, travelling on one of the Yorkshire lines, made herself particularly obnoxious to the guard by putting her head out of the carriage window at every station to ask: "Is this Armley?" As it was a very hot day, and the train a crowded one, the guard at last lost his temper, and said: "My dear madam, make yourself easy; I'll come and tell you when we reach Armley." This he did; and, finding her asleep, he awoke her. "Ma'am," he said, "look sharp! here we are at Armley." "Nay, lad!" answered the phlegmatic old dame, "I don't want to get aht; I nobbut (only) want to see 't place our Johnny's eldest lass works at!"

A WELL-KNOWN IDIOT—Willie Dawson—belonging to the parish of Lunnan, in Forfarshire, often astonished people by his replies. The congregation of his parish church had for some time annoyed the minister by their habit of sleeping in church. He had often endeavoured to impress them with the impropriety of such conduct, and one day when Willie was sitting in the front gallery wide-awake, when many were slumbering round him, the clergyman endeavoured to awaken the attention of his hearers by stating the fact, saying: "You see even Willie Dawson, the idiot, does not fall asleep as so many of you are doing." Willie, not liking to be thus designated, coolly replied: "Ay, and if I hadna been daft I might ha' been asleepin' too."



## SOCIETY.

THE Princess of Wales and the Princesses Victoria and Maud are to leave town about the middle of July, and they will proceed to Grimsden, to spend a month with the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland at their beautiful place on the Traun See, before going to Denmark, where they are to stay for two or three months.

AMONG other birthday presents that the Queen sent to the Duchess of York on her twenty-eighth natal day was a large family Bible, in which are to be written and signed by the Duke and Duchess of York the names, dates of birth, and dates of baptism of all the children that may happen to be born to the present Royal House of York.

The Queen of Italy is said to be not only the most beautiful but one of the best educated of all European queens. She speaks English, French, German and Spanish, reads Latin and Greek, knows the great poets thoroughly, reads Darwin, Ruskin, and much theological literature, is a botanist and geologist, and devotes much time to charitable projects.

THE Amer of Afghanistan fitted out his son for his journey to England and stay here with everything necessary for his comfort and happiness, and to enable him worthily to maintain his dignity. Each one of the large retinue of the Prince received a considerable sum of money to spend while in England; not one attendant came with less than two or three hundred pounds, and according to the degree of rank, it reaches a thousand or over.

THE Danish Court painter, Tuxen, who executed a large picture representing the marriage of the Duke of York for the Queen, has received a commission from the Emperor of Russia for a huge picture of the Imperial marriage last December. This work is to be sixteen feet long and thirteen feet high, and all the personages depicted in it are to give special sittings to the artist. There are to be three copies of the picture, which are to be presented severally to the Queen, to the King and Queen of Denmark, and to the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse.

AFTER the wedding ceremony the Duke and Duchess d'Aosta will proceed to Italy and pass several days in Rome. Their Royal Highnesses will occupy the same apartment occupied by the German Emperor in the Quirinal Palace. There will be a few fêtes given on this occasion, the principal ones being a large dinner party and a garden party in the Quirinal Gardens. The Princess Letitia, who will then have assumed the venerable title of Dowager Princess, will also proceed to Rome at the same time, and inhabit the Consolat Palazzo.

THE Prince of Wales is to visit Cirencester on July 25th for the Jubilee of the Royal Agricultural College, when he will probably be the guest of Lord and Lady Bathurst at Cirencester House. The Prince leaves town for the season on Monday, July 29th, when he goes to Goodwood, on a visit to the Duke of Richmond, until the afternoon of Friday, August 2nd, and then to Cowes for about twelve days.

THE Queen of Portugal is said to have saved her husband's life during a recent bull-fight held at the Campo Pequeno. Thousands of spectators were present, and no one had eyes for aught save the celebrated Guerrita, the most popular toreador in Portugal, who was surpassing all previous feats on that occasion. So greatly were all absorbed that it was not remarked that a strong wind had arisen, which caused the flagpoles to creak ominously. Suddenly the attention of those seated opposite the royal box became distracted from the toreador, and the people rose en masse, waving frantically to the King and crying out that he was in danger. The Queen, who sat beside him, glanced upwards, and was just in time to spring up, and, by dint of superhuman exertion, catch and hold up the falling flag-staff, which would otherwise have struck the King on the head. Had it not been for her presence of mind his Majesty must have been killed on the spot; for the pole was surmounted by a heavy wooden ball.

## STATISTICS.

800,000 pounds of tea are consumed in England daily.

GREAT BRITAIN pays £100,000,000 a year for imported foods.

PROJECTILES fired from modern high-test guns fly through the air at a speed of 1,968 miles per hour.

THE British Empire and its dependencies and colonies embrace 11,000,000 square miles, or about the size of all Africa.

THE average weight of women's clothing in winter is much greater than that which adorns the opposite sex. Worth once said that the weight of a man's winter clothes averaged 15lbs.; of a woman's, 18lbs.

## GEMS.

METHOD is the very hinge of business, and there is no method without punctuality.

THE essence of knowledge is, having it, to apply it; not having it, to confess your ignorance.

STRONG minds will be strongly bent, and usually labour under a strong bias; but there is no mind so weak and powerless as not to have inclinations, and none so guarded as to be without its prepossessions.

THE face is an expression of the soul; and each thought, each expression makes an imperishable impression on the soul. Every word spoken and every action done in the presence of a human being make an impression for eternity upon an immortal soul.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLE SHORT CAKE.—Season good apple-sauce with butter, sugar and spices if desirable. Make a short cake, open and butter it and spread with the apple-sauce in layers. Serve with sweetened whipped cream.

PEARL BARLEY AND APPLES.—Pick and wash four ounces of pearl barley, and let it stand in water twelve hours; drain and put it into a pan with three pints of water; add a little salt and boil for two hours; pour this into a pie-dish which has been well buttered; add half a pound of peeled and cored apples and two ounces of sugar. Bake in a moderate oven for one hour. Serve with sugar and cream.

HAM CROQUETTES.—Take equal parts of finely minced ham and plain boiled rice, carefully dried. The ham should be passed two or three times through a mincing machine to insure its being perfectly fine. Mix the ingredients together, season with cayenne pepper, salt, and a suspicion of mace; moisten with a raw egg and then mould into small croquettes; dip in egg, then in bread-crumbs and fry in boiling fat.

FROSTED RICE PUDDING.—Cook in double boiler till soft—about one hour—one cup rice in one quart of milk; before taking out add a little salt, and butter the size of an egg. Beat together the yolks of three eggs and the grated peel of one lemon; add to the rice, and pour into the dish it is to be served in. Beat the whites of the eggs with one cup sugar and the strained juice of the lemon. Spread over the pudding, and set in the oven a few minutes to brown.

PRUNE JELLY.—One half pound prunes cooked soft in one and one-half pints water. Remove the stones carefully from the prunes, and add the water in which the prunes were cooked to one half box of gelatine, previously dissolved in water, one-half-cup sugar, and then add the prunes; cook a few minutes, and then turn into a mould and set on the ice to harden. To be served with whipped cream, or cream and powdered sugar. If the water in which the prunes were cooked has boiled away, add enough boiling water to equal the original pint and a half.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

WHEN first taken from mines opals are so tender that they can be picked to pieces with the finger-nail.

OVER 400 diamonds are known to have been recovered from the ruins of Babylon. Many are uncut, but most are polished on one or two sides only.

To this day Lapp men and women dress precisely alike. They wear tunics belted loosely at the waist, tight breeches and wrinkled leathern stockings, pointed shoes; their whole appearance, in short, is identical.

Of all games golf is one in which women can most nearly compete with men—a difference of perhaps not more than nine strokes on the round reckoning as the levelling handicap between average players of either sex.

THE ancient Egyptian cats were yellow, with reddish stripes, such as are occasionally seen nowadays, and called by some Venetian cats. The cat was domesticated in Europe shortly after the Christian era, and the first specimens brought into England were very highly valued.

METAL chromium has been successfully combined with aluminium, producing a compound as hard as steel. The two metals cannot be combined as such, but the ores are mixed and then submitted to the action of the electric current in the furnace, when the compound metal is produced.

EVERY year a number of boys are sent from Siam by the King to England to learn different things. One learns upholstery, one learns typewriting, one learns languages, one learns science, and so on. When they return to Siam each takes with him some different information to impart to others.

SOME birds in Patagonia have a foolish habit of roosting low down, close to the ice, and in the morning one may sometimes see the curious sight of scores of these unfortunates with their tails frozen into the ice. There they may be compelled to remain until the sun, by the process of melting them out, liberates the prisoners.

ONE secret of the willow's marvellous tenacity of life is to be found in the fact that it sends its roots a long way in search of moisture. It was discovered after an important aqueduct had caved in that its walls were cracked and filled for many feet with roots. These roots came from willows at least thirty feet distant.

TURBINE wheels are being tried instead of screws as the propelling power on small steamers at Dresden. Experiments made with one boat, propelled first with a three-bladed screw and then with a turbine wheel, showed that a speed five per cent. greater could be obtained with ten per cent. less horse-power by using the wheel.

THE unreliability of certain processes of preparing diastase has given no little trouble to persons engaged in occupations requiring a large amount of this substance. Diastase is the ferment formed during the germination of grain. It is a soluble nitrogenous ferment capable of converting starch and dextrin into sugar. From Japan comes a new process of preparing this substance. A variety of mushroom is cultivated on wheat bran. It throws out roots that gather to itself tiny crystals of diastase, and the entire plant seems to be a collector or generator of this ferment. A report of the experiments made with this method contains the following statement: "Diastase of purity sufficient for commercial purposes was obtained in considerable quantities by washing the bran and afterwards crystallizing the diastase from the water. Equal parts of diastase and crude wheat bran in the proportion of ten per cent. of prepared grain will produce, it is said, a more perfect conversion than ten per cent. of the best malt. The use of the bran for this purpose does not seem to injure it for feeding, as cattle flourish on it. This diastase will produce twenty per cent. of alcohol in a suitable sugar solution." The importance of this discovery will be at once apparent to users of this ferment.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. J.—At Somerset House.

VENUS.—In the reign of Charles II.

O. B.—All you can do is to advertise.

IN TROUBLE.—Take legal action at once.

CHARLIE.—We cannot help you in your search.

ANKHOUR.—It is not possible to do as you suggest.

A. S.—You would be liable to prosecution for bigamy.

WRATHFUL.—There is nothing for it but to take legal action.

CHERIC.—Look in the London Directory; there are several.

QUEST.—At the address of the association, wherever that may be.

INQUIRITIVE.—The crocodile's egg is about the size of that of the goose.

SUFFERER.—What you require is medical advice, and that we do not give.

Q. S.—Scotch alone and Irish blackthorn are the same plant—a stunted shrub.

CONSTANT READER.—A sharp penknife is about the safest thing that can be used.

ALEC.—The word municipal is pronounced as though spelled mu-nis-e-pal; the accent on the second syllable.

ANASTASIA.—Perhaps some physician who has had experience in similar cases could prescribe successfully for you.

P. G.—We cannot help you in the matter, you had better consult some brother expert as to the process you speak of.

DISTRESSED.—No cure for bow legs when the individual has grown beyond childhood; the bones have then "set" permanently.

BOA.—It is the prerogative of the Crown to create peers at will, although our present Queen does so only on the advice of her Ministers.

G. S.—Almost all of the leading papers of the large cities have advertisements of taxidermists. Through these you can obtain information.

BEER.—A smile, a slight inclination of the head is all that is required, as the gentleman usually offers his arm, which she immediately accepts.

NERVOUS.—Practice differs so much in different localities that it is not easy to give a definition of best man's duties which will fit all places and classes.

JURINA.—You could not pointedly ask the young man what his intentions were. Your mother could, with very strict propriety, put the question to him.

JANEY.—A liberal sprinkling of powdered borax, when persevered with, first lessons, and finally drives them away, but it needs patient perseverance and a liberal hand.

PURPLED.—The nineteenth century began January 1st, 1901, and will be completed December 31st, 1900. It is called the nineteenth century because the last year completes the 1900.

MOLLY.—The choice of a wedding dress should turn largely on the circumstances and the after life of the young couple. Many young girls get up an elaborate costume that they never use afterward.

YOUNG LOVER.—The salute at meeting and parting is all sufficient. Lovers of every degree, and especially young ones, should always bear in mind the old adage about familiarity and an ignoble consequence.

CHERRY.—In packing furs away in camphor remember that the pieces should not touch the fur. This will make the colour lighter. If the gum may be put in little bags, and thus protected, it will not affect the fur.

W. B.—No doubt at all about New Zealand being a healthier country than this; its climate is much less severe; like our own with all the evil taken out of it; snow seldom falls there, and really never lies when it does fall.

AMBITION.—Do not hesitate because you cannot devote all your time to the art. If you can spare it an hour or two each day you will be making progress toward the proficiency necessary to acquire to make a respectable living by it.

GERARD.—Strictly speaking, the best society is that which is founded on education, intelligence, and worth; but the possession of wealth has always had a great deal to do with the admission to it of persons aspiring to be in "good society."

MARIE.—The hair should be kept clean by careful washing and brushing, and if very dry, a little oil may be rubbed in at the roots. Sometimes the general health needs attention; but, as a rule, the above treatment of the hair will give good results.

COOKIE.—A quick dressing is made as follows: One raw egg, two tablespoonfuls of best olive oil, or cream, one tablespoonful of vinegar, one tablespoonful of sugar. Season with salt, a little mustard—a half teaspoonful is quite enough—and a little cayenne pepper.

L. C.—Stale bread crumbs without crust or hard outside, cut in a convenient little lump as a rubber, and very finely powdered and sifted chalk, all quite dry, rubbed over the silk and dusted off thoroughly. Have a clean white linen cloth when you are cleansing it.

T. ATKINS.—In the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava 673 officers and men took part. There were 130 killed, 124 wounded, and 15 taken prisoners. Only 195 rode back, the remainder having been dismounted. Out of 673 horses, 473 were killed and 42 wounded.

P. W. W.—Two parts carbonate of soda, one part finely powdered pumice stone, and one part finely powdered chalk; mix into a paste with a little water, let it dry on, then wash off with soap and water; finally rub up the polish with fine dry whiting and wash leather.

HOUSEWIFE.—A mixture of pounded camphor and freshly-ground black pepper is the best thing to keep them away from the clothes; but for garments in use combine the above with a weekly airing, dusting, and shaking of all garments kept in wardrobes, presses and cupboards.

## TRUE LOVE ENDURES.

IN an atmosphere love-laden lived a maiden fair,  
I, her favoured friend and lover, also sojourned there;  
Here the sunlight sifted brightly gold showers through  
the trees,  
Here the birds sang softly, lightly, carolled to; the  
breeze.

She had hair of golden splendour—stars shone in her  
eyes—  
Flashing from them warm and tender glow of tropic  
skies.  
From her lips of velvet, kisses—sweet as roses red—  
Touched with blessing, warm with bliss, our affection  
fed.

Tints which shamed the blushing peaches, words which  
rose and fell  
Like bird-notes in forest reaches where song fairies  
dwell;  
All her heart gave of its fragrance to her vows of love,  
On them laid in benediction blessings from above.

Source the fairest mosses yielded to her light footfall,  
All the blossoms waved their centers at her gentle call;  
Whispered leaves their admiration as she passed them  
by,  
Grasses bowed in adoration when their friend drew  
nigh.

Blithe was she as bird or blossom—child of nature, too—  
Glad to recognise in friendship all things good and  
true.  
Nature seemed to harken gladly to her friendly voice,  
With her grievings murmured sadly, with her joys  
rejoiced.

One were we in soul and being, one our forward view—  
Love's ecstatic glances seeing life far off and new,  
Building an enchanted dwelling where our heart should  
live.

Never wearying of telling what joys time should give.  
Surely angels loved to listen to her accents pure,  
Surely none would care to tell her joys might not  
endure;

Thus walked we in love's enchantment rarely dimmed  
with tears,  
Thus our souls in closest embrace white-winged soared  
for years.

But the angels learned to covet their mate given to me,  
All our prophecies mistaken, naught availed my plea;  
Now beyond the glooms and twilight, all sad thoughts  
above,  
There with other saints resplendent waits for me my  
love.

God is good and unto mortals opens hope's bright door;  
Souls may sweep through death's pearl portals when  
earth's ills are o'er;  
Where joys mocking comprehension guard God's shining  
throne,  
Where love's light is made eternal I shall meet my own,  
Never more to sap with sorrow or to grieve alone.

I. E. J.

CONNIE.—Your taste for painting should be encouraged.  
A great deal can be accomplished without the aid of a  
teacher, if you go to work earnestly and resolutely.  
After a while you may be enabled to connect yourself  
with some school of design, and enjoy opportunities for  
advancement not afforded you now.

SCHOOLBOY.—The Latin motto *semper vigilans*, the  
literal meaning of which is "always watchful," is said  
to have been that of an old Roman general, who insisted  
upon his soldiers being always on the watch to supply  
him with the earliest information, either of treachery  
within or of enemies without the tent.

G. Y.—The "baker's dozen," meaning thirteen, dates  
back to the time of Edward I., when very rigid laws  
were enacted regarding the sale of bread by bakers.  
The punishment for falling short in the sale of loaves by  
the dozen was so severe that, in order to run no risk,  
the bakers were accustomed to give thirteen or fourteen  
loaves to the dozen, and thus arose this peculiar expression.

VINCENT.—Feed them on mulberry leaves, which is  
their proper food, if you can get it, otherwise they may  
be fed on lettuce leaves, which should not be too young,  
and must be quite fresh and supplied freshly to them  
at least twice a day, morning and evening, at which  
times all the other leaves, evansons, &c., should be  
removed. Their health largely depends on their being  
kept pure and sweet.

BIRDIE.—It would not be wise to make an engagement, but to come to an understanding of things as they  
exist at the present moment. Then leave the future  
absolutely untrammelled by any pledges. Under such  
circumstances, if either party finds, as many a person  
has done, that a new and stronger affection springs up  
in the heart, there will be no handicap, no regret, no  
reproach in forming new ties.

FAHNT.—You are not too young to take charge of your  
father's house. All you lack is experience, which will  
come to you as time progresses. You will have the  
most trying time with the servants, who are apt to take  
advantage of the inexperienced; but by adopting strict  
rules and maintaining system in all that pertains to  
your daily work you will soon be mistress of your  
household in every sense of the term.

H. S.—Pocket-knife blades are very unevenly tem-  
pered. Even in so-called standard cutlery some are  
soft, for the latter there is no remedy; but the temper  
of hard ones can easily be drawn slightly. Take a  
kitchen poker and heat it red-hot. Have the blade that  
is to be drawn bright, and hold it on the poker for a  
moment. When the colour runs down to violet blue  
stick the blade in a piece of tallow or beef suet until  
cold.

MAIRIE.—The stain may be removed from coloured  
cotton or woollen stuffs with a solution of oxalic acid,  
which, when the object is attained, must at once be  
removed from the material. We doubt your being able  
to do it without injuring the colour. There are several  
other methods, but all of them are likely to injure the  
colour given. Your safest plan would be to take the  
stained garment and show it to a professional cleaner,  
who will be able to judge when he sees it.

FAT BOY.—Measurement of weight by the "stone"  
arose from the old custom farmers had of weighing wool  
with a stone. Every farmer kept a large stone at his  
farm for this purpose. When a dealer came along he  
balanced a plank on top of a wall, and put the stone  
on one end of it and the bags of wool on the other until  
the weights were equal. At first the stones were of all  
sorts of sizes and weights, with the result that dealers  
who wished to make a living had to be remarkably  
knowing in their estimates of them. But the many  
inconveniences involved by this inequality eventually  
resulted in all stones being made of a uniform weight.

PANSELOPE.—1. Damp the stuff, apply fat or butter to  
the stain, on which well rub soap. Let it act as a  
softener for a few minutes, and then wash out alternately  
with oil of turpentine and hot water. If after  
several trials this treatment does not succeed, apply  
raw yolk of egg mixed with oil of turpentine, and allow  
it to dry on the stain, and when dry scratch it away  
and thoroughly wash out in hot water. 2. Sponge  
well with slightly diluted benzoic collas, or equal parts  
strong ammonia water, ether, and alcohol; place a piece  
of blotting paper under the grease spot, dip a sponge  
first in water and squeeze it out, then in the mixture,  
and rub it on the spot.

AN INTERESTED ONE.—The expedition is in first  
instance one of discovery; it has long been believed  
that an open navigable sea exists at what is for con-  
venience described as the North Pole, and that through  
the sea a shorter route to Japan, China, &c., could be  
got; some, again, hold that the "Pole" is solid land  
under an equable temperature, as arctic birds are always  
seen to fly north when winter begins to set in; if that  
is so, the land may be inhabited, and important facts  
await their discovery; that there is a passage through  
Polar waters to the other side of the world has been proved,  
but the question remains, how far does the open water  
extend; in the second instance, Nansen goes to make  
observations of the true site of the so-called "North  
Pole."

LONDON.—The discovery of the potato as an article of  
food is said to have been made in a rather peculiar way.  
While the story may not be true, it is good as a story.  
A boy was clearing up a field, raking brushwood and  
vines and burning the rubbish. As he turned over the  
coals and ashes to brighten the fire he saw a round  
object that looked like a puff ball. He picked it up,  
and on pressing it slightly it broke, and the white,  
mealy middle burst out into his hand. His thumb was  
burned, and, instinctively, he stuck it in his mouth.  
The potato on it had a very agreeable taste, and he ate  
more of it. When he went home he told his family,  
and, when they had waited some time in terror lest  
the boy had eaten a poisonous thing, they made up  
their minds that they also would eat potatoes.

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